

Fall 9-24-2014

This is How We Did It: A Study of Black Male Resilience and Attainment at a Hispanic Serving Institution Through the Lenses of Critical Race Theory

Demond T. Hargrove

Seton Hall University, HARGRODE@SHU.EDU

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hargrove, Demond T., "This is How We Did It: A Study of Black Male Resilience and Attainment at a Hispanic Serving Institution Through the Lenses of Critical Race Theory" (2014). *Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs)*. 2013.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2013>

This is How We Did It: A Study of Black Male Resilience and Attainment at a
Hispanic Serving Institution Through the Lenses of Critical Race Theory

By

Demond T. Hargrove

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy

Seton Hall University

December 2014

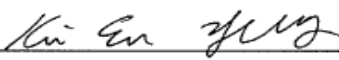
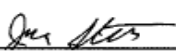
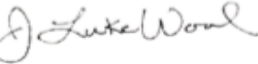
© 2014 Demond T. Hargrove

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Demond T. Hargrove**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ph.D.** during this **Fall Semester 2014**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor: Dr. Eunyoung Kim		9/24/14
Committee Member: Dr. Joseph Stetar		9/24/14
Committee Member: Dr. J. Luke Wood		9/24/14

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

Abstract

This qualitative narrative inquiry based research sought to gain a better understanding of how Black male upperclassmen and recent college graduates experience the process of academic resilience and attainment within the context of their intersecting identities of race, class, and gender at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The theoretical framework guiding this study draws upon two distinctive collections of scholarship: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and academic resilience.

Findings revealed Black male risk to postsecondary attainment was adversely impacted by academic (dis)integration, fractured sense of belonging, physical and mental illnesses, lack of financial support, racialized and gendered experiences, and lingering affects of resource deficient and violent communities. These threats were thwarted by participants' self-determination, self-efficacy, spiritual faith, proactive help seeking tendencies, familial and peer support networks, and the supportive HSI campus ethos. It was also found that successful Black men educated and empowered other marginalized campus peers on how to persist by sharing their success-based counter narratives. Findings led to the development of the Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC), which provides a framework that infuses CRTs intersectionality of social identities with experiential risk and protective factors, explaining the process of academic resilience experienced by Black male collegians.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons, Cristian Jaali and Gabriel Sinché Hargrove, two beautiful Black and Latino young men destined for greatness.

In memory of my good friend, Susan Bauer (March 1, 2014). Thank you Suebee.

Acknowledgments

Philippians 4:13 – *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.* I thank my friends and family for their tremendous support. To my Hartford, CT, NJCU, Student Affairs, OSP, BAAFSSO, and SHANGO Family – Nav, AJ, JB, Wood, and JSmith – thank you for the encouragement and support! To Dr. John Melendez for his unwavering encouragement and patience over the years – you made this possible! SueBee, Shereen, and Dr. Graham for the prayers! Phyllis, Adele, Cindy, Ivette, and Lyn thank you for the help and advice. Dr. Charles Lynch, your constant reminders that, “The Ancestors are watching and cheering you on,” was a great source of motivation – I was never alone! To the Blueprint Dr. La Toro Yates, SALUTE! Dr. Erik Morales, thank you for your outstanding research on academic resilience. Dr. Eubanks and the Black Doctoral Breakfast Club – thank you for the safe space. To Drs. Stetar and Wood, two giants in the field – it was an honor to learn under you. Thank you SHU! Words cannot describe my appreciation for my Mentor, Dr. Eunyoung Kim; thank you Dr. Kim for teaching me all aspects of true scholarship. You are an amazing teacher and hardest working person on Earth! I am forever indebted to the 23 Brothers who shared their amazing stories of How They Did It; may God bless you, keep you and continue to guide your paths to success. To my family – Ma, Pop, Grandma, Enya, Suegro y Suegra, Ben, and my Brothers – thank you for your patience, understanding, and support. My sons Gabriel and Cristian, I love you. Thank you for reminding Daddy to, “Work hard, play hard!” Thinking about the two of you helped me through the most difficult times! Finally, to my beautiful wife Silvana, I love you. God blessed me with the most incredible partner; and this could not have been accomplished without you. Your strength is immeasurable, and I have been in constant awe since I met you. Thank you for always believing in me, inspiring me, and giving me a good kick when I needed it. **We did it!**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions.....	11
Theoretical Perspective.....	11
Significance of the Study	12
Definitions of Terms.....	14
Organization of the Dissertation.....	15
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Anatomy of the Conversation on Black Male Success via Institutional Context.....	18
Black Male Success at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)	20
Black Male Success at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).....	26
A Glimpse Into Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)	32
Synthesis of Recommendations Across Institutional Type	38
Resilience Definitions and Concepts	42
Resilience Operationalized: Concepts and Processes.....	46
Resilience in Educational Context.....	52
Analytical Framework Critical Race Theory (CRT)	58
Foundations of CRT.....	59
CRT Tenets	61
CRT in Higher Education	65
Summary.....	71
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	73
Introduction.....	73
Methodological Approach	74
Research Design.....	81
Research Site and Participant Selection.....	82
Data Collection Procedures.....	86
Data Analysis	89
Trustworthiness.....	91

Limitations	94
Protection of Human Subjects	95
Researcher Positionality.....	95
Summary.....	97
CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS.....	98
Introduction.....	98
Participants Demographic Analysis.....	98
Participant Profiles.....	110
Bennet – The Windshield.....	110
Billy – Destiny	110
E.J. – Mastermind	111
Florence – Hope.....	111
James – Tunnel Vision.....	112
Jerry – Something Better	113
Joseph – Strategist.....	113
Kareem – Mr. Overachiever	114
Leo – Confident	114
Lonnie – Observations	115
Megaman – Constant Change	115
Nasir – Family Over Everything (FOE).....	116
Nick Braine – Relentless.....	116
Omolayo – One Man Army	117
Sheak – The Folder	117
Smith – Paper Work.....	118
Steve – Pressure Proof.....	118
Terrell – Determined.....	119
Thomas – Balancing Act.....	119
Urban Brother – 7-Year-Old Man.....	120
Veinte Uno – Purpose	120
Woody – Getting My Life Back	121
Zach – Scoring Goals.....	122
Summary.....	122
CHAPTER V. RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	124
Introduction.....	124
Internal and External Threats to College Completion	125
Internal Risk Factor One:	
Deficient Academic and Social Integration	126
Internal Risk Factor Two:	
Physical and Mental Health Challenges	132
External Risk Factor:	
Financial Barriers to College Completion	137
Selecting and Deploying Protective Factors.....	140

<i>“By any means necessary... ”:</i>	
Individual Level Protective Factors	142
<i>“F.O.E. that’s my motto, Family Over Everything”:</i>	
Family Level Protective Factors	149
<i>“I reached out”:</i>	
Social Environmental Level Protective Factors.....	153
The Hispanic Serving Institution: Supporting Black Male Resilience	160
<i>“I see her as a mentor...as a close family member”:</i>	
Faculty and Staff Success Navigators.....	161
<i>“In 10 years...I could be just like these guys”:</i>	
Modeling Successful Black Men	164
Resilience Within the Context of Critical Race Theory	170
The Intersection of Race & Gender	171
Navigating Social Disorder and Resource-Deficient Communities.....	177
Sharing Experiential Knowledge: A Form of Social Justice.....	184
This Is How We Did It: Black Male Counter Narratives.....	190
<i>“It sounds so cliché, but determination that’s it”:</i>	
Determined to Succeed	191
<i>“I’d say it’s just the people around me”:</i>	
The Push and Pull of Support Systems	193
Summary.....	196
CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	199
Introduction.....	199
Overview of the Study	199
Methodology.....	202
The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC)	204
Summary of Findings and Discussion	207
Implications for Practice.....	229
BMARC PHASE I: Risk Factor Recognition – Preempting Threats to Attainment.....	229
BMARC PHASE II: Protective Factor Selection – Comprehensive Support Programming.....	232
BMARC PHASE III: Sharing Experiential Knowledge – Providing Outlets for Counter-Narratives.....	235
Recommendations for Future Research.....	236
Conclusion	241
References.....	244
Appendix A Recruitment Flyer.....	282

Appendix B Interview Protocol	283
Appendix C Demographic Questionnaire.....	285

List of Tables

Table		Page
1	Psychosocial Factors Associated with Resilience.....	43
2	Participant Demographic Background ($n = 23$).....	99
3	Participants' Academic Data.....	101
4	Participants Financial Data	103
5	Participants by Family Income, Dependency Status, Poverty Threshold Status, Financial Aid Award, and Merit Scholarship	105
6	Participants Academic Characteristics by Educational Level, First Admit Type, GPA, Major, and Time to Degree	106
7	Participants by Ethnicity, Place of Birth, Age, Marital Status, Number of Children, and Religion.....	108
8	Participants by Highest Level of Parental Education, and Number of Siblings.....	109
9	Percent and Number of Participants by Risk Factor Type and Description ($N = 23$).....	126
10	Percent and Number of Participants by Protective Factor Level ($N = 23$).....	142
11	Number of Participants by Social/ Environmental Level Protective Factor ($n = 18$).....	154

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1 The Resiliency Model (Richardson, 2002)	50
2 The Resilience Cycle (Morales & Trotman, 2011).....	51
3 The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC)	206

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The postsecondary attainment crisis confronting Black males is one of the most pressing issues in American higher education. Current literature has highlighted Black male educational underachievement as well as negative institutional experiences relative to all racial groups, female counterparts, and across institutional settings (Frierson, Pearson, & Wyche, 2009; Garibaldi, 2007; Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008; Harper, 2009b; Harper, 2012a; Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008b; Strayhorn, 2010). Black student experiences at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been the primary focus of recent research. Although some findings highlight that Black men aspire to college at similar rates to their White male counterparts (Toldson, 2008), Black males are underrepresented in higher education, accounting for less than 6% of the entire U.S. undergraduate population in 2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In 2008, less than one-third of African American men in the traditional college-age cohort from 18 to 24 years of age were enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions. The research looking at bachelor's degree attainment between Black men and women is often disconcerting; baccalaureate degrees earned by Black females were nearly double that of males in 2010 (66% vs. 34%), whereas degrees conferred upon White and Asian/Pacific Islander men and women were more evenly distributed (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Existing literature attributes the below average postsecondary enrollment and attainment of Black men to structural and cultural factors (Carter, 2008). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) cited

anti-intellectual sentiments such as “acting-white” as a notion that discourages many Black men from attending college, while Mauer and King (2007) argued that low college enrollment is associated with high Black male incarceration rates due to unreasonably disproportionate sentencing. Other researchers underscored that high tuition rates and decreasing financial resources institutional racism, alienation, and an unwelcoming campus ethos have also been found to negatively impact Black male educational attainment (Burd, 2002; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Harper, 2012b; Nelson-Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer & Wood, 2012a; Perna, 2000).

Studies of academic failure tend to yield volumes of data explaining why Black men fail as opposed to how they succeed. Recommendations for improvement are often discussed only in the conclusion and call for sweeping policy, programming, or institutional reform, generally overlooking the individual experience (Allen, 1992; Cuyjet, 2006; Wood, Hilton & Lewis, 2012). This approach to examining the postsecondary experiences of Black men has presented the solutions to the conundrum as being unattainable and has run counter to the meritocratic ideals of American society, which focus on improving upon successful models.

According to critics, institutional leaders and policy makers have attempted to comprehend and eradicate a myriad of psycho-social, economic, and discriminatory practices based upon the wealth of “deficit informed research¹” that frames low college achievement of the Black population (Davis, 2003; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Perna, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Highlighting disparities is a required component for the development of national, local, and institutional policy and programming that counteracts the adverse trends in

¹ Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define deficit-informed research as that [research] which silences, ignores and distorts epistemologies of People of Color. Thus focusing on negative aspects, and creating and or reinforcing stereotypes through empirical research.

African American male postsecondary outcomes. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) wrote: “Deficit informed research” negates this group’s achievements and the factors attributable to those attainments while upholding “racialized notions about people of color” (p. 26). Deficit studies have informed causation of underachievement, albeit have been significantly deficient at illustrating success factors of African American male collegians.

Emerging scholarship has departed from a deficit framework in research on Black male collegians, to focus on successful Black male achievers at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the *factors* attributable to their educational attainment. These studies have employed noteworthy (yet often overused) theoretical and conceptual frameworks such as Tinto’s (1993) interactionist theory, Ogbu and Simon’s (1998) cultural-ecological theory, and Majors and Billson (1992) “Cool Pose” to examine African American college men. Of course, despite these shortcomings this research has advanced our knowledge of Black male success. Researchers have found that successful Black males at PWIs serve as emissaries; displaying strong self-efficacy and engagement and leveraging peers, family members, mentors, and spirituality, along their journey to success (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006a, 2009b, 2012a; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010).

Similarly, collegians at HBCUs also possess a strong belief in their abilities and seek opportunities to engage with the campus community. Much like their PWI peers, Black male students attending HBCUs identify relationships, familial, financial, emotional, and peers as being valuable components to their success (Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Fries-Britt, Burt & Franklin, 2012; Guiffrida, 2005; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008).

The aforementioned literature has begun to provide a refreshing approach to examining disparities in Black male attainment via a focus on fundamental elements associated with the experiences of successful African American college men. The recommendations centered on the findings of these success-based literature primarily focus on enhancing the achievement factors. Still, a thorough analysis of how Black men succeed is lacking in much of the literature. Explaining how Black males access, organize, choose, and implement support moves them beyond marginalization--where they appear as passive recipients of help--repositioning them as proactive participants (Harper, 2012a).

Given the impact of the legacy of slavery, psychological, social, and financial adversities associated with being Black and male in the United States significantly affects the overall success of Black males (Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012; Feagin, Vera, Imani, 1996). Understanding how, and the process by which Black male collegians negotiate racialized societal norms and the rigor of collegiate life provides insight into their individual prowess.

Regardless of institutional milieu, what percolates thematically throughout this literature of success is the resilience of Black college males. Racial microaggression² faced by participants, and the factors attributable to their success align with the distinct factors that help to explain the concept of resilience, risk factors and protective factors. Resilience researchers have offered numerous definitions of resilience. Rutter (2006) stated that the concept of resilience as, “relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or the overcoming of stress or adversity” (p. 2). Resistance is manifested through the application of protective factors that “refer to influences that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person's response to some environmental hazard that predisposes to a maladaptive outcome” (Rutter, 1985, p. 600). Masten, Best, and Garmezy

² Pierce et al. (1978, p. 66) define racial microaggressions as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are put downs of Blacks by offenders” (as cited in Solórzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2000, p.60).

(1990) defined resilience as, “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (p. 425). Morales and Trotman (2011) provided a useful definition of academic resilience that aligned with the experiences of successful Black males, “the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding” (p. 8).

There has been growth in recent years in the volume of empirical work that examined the academic resilience of traditionally underrepresented minorities, primarily from economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged groups, including Black and Latino (a) students (Benard, 1997; Braddock, 1991; Eubanks, 2004; Floyd, 1996; Luthar, 2003; Masten, 2001; Morales, 2008; Morales & Trotman, 2011; Taylor & Wang, 2000; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Scholars have recently begun exploring minority college students’ academic resilience associated with transition and academic persistence in college, with special attention paid to Black males. For example, Warde (2008) conducted a qualitative study of 11 Black male graduate students to ascertain the factors that contributed to their undergraduate attainment. The group reported risk factors that threatened their attainment, including incarceration, fatherlessness, and financial hardship. The participants also revealed that they were able to access resources to matriculate, established a relationship with a mentor, and were resilient despite adversities (Warde, 2008, p. 64).

Additionally, Brown’s (2008) quantitative study of 154 Black students (108 females and 45 males) examined the relationship between socialization, social support, and the resilience of the participants. In this study, racial socialization messages were communicated to Black students by parents regarding the importance of embracing their cultural heritage and responding

positively to racialized encounters primarily in school settings. Brown (2008) utilized the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) to measure the resiliency of the students. He found that his main hypothesis was supported in that receiving racial socialization messages and social support positively impacted the academic resiliency of the students.

Departing from a deficit approach framework, the current research focusing on Black male success has examined the attributes and environmental conditions--primarily referred to as *factors*--that are thought to have a positive impact on Black male students' academic achievement. Those attributes include: individual factors (i.e. help seeking tendencies, self-esteem, and motivation), familial support factors (i.e. supportive parents, role models, and high parental expectations) and social/ environmental support (i.e. tutoring programs, mentors, faculty, and peer support). The research has examined these attributes individually and in segments, but few studies have considered these factors systematically utilizing the concept of resilience; even fewer have sought to explain the process of resilience. Morales and Trotman (2011) explained the process of resilience as being the student's ability to,

strategically and simultaneously coordinate resources in ways that helped them reach their academic goals. This coordination involved knowing when to utilize which resources, how to combine resources, and how/when to tap into the various aspects of the protective factors being implemented. (p. 18)

A clear and concise portrait of the myriad of risks Black men face in college, coupled with a thorough understanding of the conscious and/or unconscious process of resilience, would be an invaluable resource for K- 12 educators, policy makers, and institutional leaders. The next section discusses the problem and gap in the literature on Black male resilience that this study endeavors to fill.

Statement of the Problem

Black men had the lowest college attainment rate among racial/ethnic groups. In academic year 2011, Black men comprised 3% (59,000) of the 1.7 million bachelor degrees conferred in the US; ranking them last among all White and Hispanic males and females, and all Black, Asian, and Pacific Island females (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). What contributes to this pattern of Black male educational underachievement? Past literature has often used a deficit-informed framework to answer this question, portraying Black male students as incapable, unintelligent, disadvantaged, and at-risk to fail (Fries-Britt, 1997; Harper, 2009a; Jenkins, 2006), feeding the stereotypes that have been proven to negatively impact the academic performance and self-efficacy of these students. Such ideas have been seen to affect institutional programming and policy strategies (Flowers, 2005; Steele & Aronson, 1995), as well as the students themselves.

Emerging scholarship, however, has worked to depart from a deficit-informed orientation by focusing on successful Black male achievers at PWIs and HBCUs, and the factors attributable to their educational attainment. These studies have found that successful Black males display strong self-efficacy and are more engaged on campus than their underachieving peers. They are resilient leverage peers, family relationships, mentors (faculty and staff), external community members, and spirituality to help them matriculate through college (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Fries-Britt, Burt, & Franklin, 2012; Harper, 2006, 2009b, 2012a; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010).

However, few scholars (Ford, Kokjie, & Lewis, 1996; Morales, 2010) have examined the process of resilience as it relates to Black male postsecondary attainment. Morales's (2010)

qualitative study of 50 Black and Latino students who were high-achieving and of low socioeconomic status examined how students blended multiple protective factors to facilitate resilience. However, his study did not disaggregate findings based on race and gender; therefore, data on how Black college men experienced resilience was unspecified. The quantitative study by Ford et al. (1996) of 104 African American males raised in urban environments found that individual-level protective factors linked to emotional intelligence (EQ) positively impacted the academic resilience of African American college men. Ford et al. (1996) utilized GPA relative to reported levels of stress as an indicator of resilience. The researchers concluded that the postsecondary struggles of Black men could be directly related to their rejection of mainstream American culture do to racialized experiences. The study by Ford et al. (1996) is limited, however, since it measured resilience based on a singular outcome, GPA.

These studies provide scant data on how Black males intentionally organize, select, and deploy resources to aid in their academic success (Morales & Trotman, 2011). Further, existing research that has examined the Black male experience at either HBCUs or PWIs has indiscriminately treated Black men as a monolithic group. Some researchers examining the experiences of Black college men agreed that the factors contributing to the engagement, achievement, and attainment of this heterogeneous population varied by institutional type (Cuyjet, 2006; Palmer & Wood, 2012b; Strayhorn, 2008a; Wood, Hilton & Lewis, 2012).

Hispanic serving institutions are the fastest growing institutions and deserve particular attention as they enroll 10% of all Black students compared to HBCUs that enroll 13% of Blacks. The Hispanic serving Institution's commitment to Latino students has been evident within its programming focused on counteracting the under preparedness, financial hardship, and immigration quandaries of Hispanic students (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005) as federal

appropriations totaling approximately \$229 million in fiscal year 2012. There are 356 Hispanic serving institutions that account for 10% of all colleges and universities, and enroll over 55% of all Latino college students and 20% of additional ethnic populations. However, unlike HBCUs, many HSIs are majority White and retain the historical campus ethos of PWIs (Aud et al., 2012; Gasman, 2008; Hispanic Associations of Colleges and Universities, 2013).

Most recently, higher education researchers have conducted studies examining student success at HSIs. My ProQuest search of studies focused on HSIs including: historical context, curriculum design, enrollment patterns, faculty, and student experiences yielded over 40,000 peer reviewed works; only one article focused intentionally on Black male experience at these institutions (Reddick, Heilig, & Valdez, 2012). Much like the researchers investigating Black male success at PWIs and HBCUs, scholars examining HSIs have uncovered success strategies and patterns applied by the host institutions, successful developmental support programs, personality traits of successful HSI enrollees, sweeping engagement initiatives, and the various lived experiences of underrepresented students (Hubbard & Stage, 2009; Kaufman, Agars, & Lopez-Wagner, 2008; Nelson-Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams & Holmes, 2007; Reddick, Heilig, & Valdez, 2012; Williams, 2004; Wolf, 2000). Reddick, Heilig, and Valdez (2012) conducted the singular empirical study investigating Black men on an HSI campus that I was able to identify. Reddick, Heilig, and Valdez (2012) found the experiences of Black men at a Texas HSI to be closely related to their counterparts at PWIs, including practicing resilience to counter similar instances of microaggressions. Reddick et al. (2012) further posited that HSIs possess “intersectional identities” that taint the educational experiences of Black male collegians (p. 203).

As the growth of these institutions is forecasted to parallel the increase in the Hispanic population, how will the experiences of Black men on these campus be impacted? Will shifts in policy, appropriations, and scholarships targeting Black college men be diverted? The current research plays an important role in aiding the dialogue that will address these questions. Despite the growth and enrollment trends at HSIs, Black male students' experiences, interactions within these college environments and communities, and perspectives remain unclear and disconnected from the specific socio-cultural and institutional contexts that shape those educational experiences.

Purpose of the Study

In 2010, approximately 56,000 Black men earned a baccalaureate degree; that number increased to over 59,000 in 2011 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). While these data are disproportionately low and teems with racist overtones, there is much to be learned from the success of Black men in postsecondary education. Research must continue to evolve and apply new investigative procedures, inquiries, and perspectives to elicit fresh data. To this end, this study aims to understand and explain how Black male upperclassmen and recent college graduates experience the process of resilience in the context of their educational attainment at a HSI. Understanding the process of resilience is a vital component in the creation of institutional programming and policy that are intentional and built upon the lived experiences of Black men (Morales & Trotman, 2011). Through a critical race counter-narrative methodology, this study will focus on identifying the specific conditions for and describing the process of academic resilience among Black males who have at least persisted through the first 2 years in college at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Specifically, how do these men identify perceived risk factors, select and deploy the applicable protective factors to counter or recover, and how is this process

influenced by race, gender, and socio-economic status? The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:

Research Questions

1. What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at an HSI during their college years?
2. How do Black male students at an HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors?
3. What influence, if any, has race and gender had on the academic resilience of Black male students at an HSI?
4. How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?

Unlike many studies that have examined Black men from singular perspectives and contexts, such as: academic performance, engagement, racialized experiences, and so forth; these research questions will provide a guide to the investigation of the Black male experience from multiple contextual angles and intersections of identity. And, will provide holistic insight into not only the factors of success, but also how Black men successfully matriculate through the HSI milieu and if those experiences propelled them to consider taking a social justice stance. The next section will discuss the theoretical perspectives that helped to shape the research questions guiding the study.

Theoretical Perspective

Critical race theory (CRT) will provide a theoretical lens to examine the lived experiences of Black males by placing race and racism at the center of the discourse. CRT is concerned with providing a means of examining and eradicating racism, power, and privilege

and with providing an outlet for marginalized groups to express their experiences with oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT will be used in the analysis of the participants' interpretations of what it means not only to be Black, but to be male and to belong to a particular social class, and how those realities converge to impact their academic achievement.

The aim of this study is to understand the process of resilience that has led to the educational attainment of Black male collegians. Also, this research seeks to understand if the participants, through their lived experiences, have acquired a commitment to social justice as it relates to racism, sexism, and classism. For example, Harper (2013) identified the presence of a "peer pedagogy" created by and for Black students at a PWI. Harper (2013) explained this phenomenon as the practice of currently enrolled students educating new, same-race students about the existing racialized campus climate; providing a safe-haven for peer to peer coping strategies instruction. This practice of educating others can be considered a form of social activism. Through a CRT analytical framework this study will explore participant's perceived experiences with "multiple layers of oppression" will be explored and it will explore if and how those experiences shaped their role as agents of social change (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Significance of the Study

Palmer et al. (2010) argued that our nation can continue to play a leading role in the knowledge based, global economy if an investment is made in Black men. These researchers cited the static rate of STEM related bachelor degrees (6.1%) awarded to Blacks from 1995 – 2004 and asserted that improvements in degree attainment for Black males would equate to greater U.S. competitiveness in the global economy. In 2010, President Obama called for 8 million new college graduates, the majority of whom are Black and Latino students in the

educational pipeline. A college education yields many benefits including more favorable labor market opportunities and stronger incentives for employment. Perna (2005) examined the economic (economic, fiscal, and labor benefits) and non-economic (health, leisure activities, and civic involvement) benefits related to various levels of educational attainment among 1992 high school graduates and the extent to which these benefits differ by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES).

Despite an increase in the number of Black men entering postsecondary education over the past several decades, they remain underrepresented in higher education. Black men continue to underperform when compared with their female counterparts and peers of other racial and ethnic groups in several educational outcomes including postsecondary enrollment, retention, and degree completion. Given the benefits that individuals and society in general accrue from higher education, the disproportionately low college enrollment and degree completion rates of Black men make them more susceptible to low-paying job and employment prospects, more susceptible to poor health, less involved in civic affairs, and at a high risk of incarceration (Perna, 2005).

Although this disheartening narrative is a reality, stories of accomplishment exist and must be told. This study intends to describe the challenges of navigating through college as Black and male, while focusing on the successes embedded in the journeys of disadvantaged Black males. In doing so, the best practices that are effective for the academic success and retention of Black males at a HSI and other institutions will be identified by analyzing students' experiences from their perspectives and voices via counter-narratives. This study will demonstrate how Black men overcome obstacles and alter their unfavorable circumstances not only to remain in and graduate from college, but also to make sense of their academic resilience

and their roles as agents of social justice. As such, this study seeks to shed light on the conditions for Black men's academic achievement and college attainment and to offer insights into the challenges these students deal with; in addition to calling for the sustained resources, services, and programs to support Black male resilience.

This study will assist higher education policy makers and student affairs practitioners in understanding how Black college men make decisions regarding academic success, and how the institution and its agents impact the decision process. Student affairs professionals and faculty could utilize the findings from this study for curriculum design that promotes early internal and external protective factor identification and to instruct students as to how to coordinate resources to thwart risk. Finally, this study has, as its main audience, researchers interested in the plight of Black men and it is hoped that it will inspire scholars to examine Black male collegians from varied perspectives in an effort to improve their degree attainment and ultimately their social mobility.

Definitions of Terms

This study utilizes some key terms that could be subject to interpretation; therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation the following definitions of key terms are provided.

Black male students/collegians. This term is used interchangeably with African American college men/male collegians to describe men enrolled in college who identify themselves as being of African or Black descent (inclusive of Caribbean).

Resilience. "The process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding" (Morales & Trotman, 2011, p. 8).

Resilience process. A student's ability to strategically and simultaneously coordinate

resources in ways that helped him or her to reach his or her academic goals. This coordination involved knowing when to utilize which resources, how to combine resources, and how/when to tap into the various aspects of the protective factors being implemented (Morales & Trotman, 2011, p. 18).

Academic success. Academic success within this study equates to persisting through the third year of study based upon the criterion of this study's site.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 provides a multi-institutional analysis of research examining various protective factors that promote Black male achievement and attainment. In addition, Chapter 2 will advance the discussion of critical race theory including its historical foundation, underpinning tenets, and a review of the related literature that employs this framework. Prevalent definitions of resilience, its processes, and models are also examined along with a literature review of the unique usages of resilience within higher education context. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research approach--which employs a constructionist epistemology, the CRT theoretical lens, narrative inquiry (via semi-structured interviews), and detailed information regarding the institutional setting and the Black male participants. Chapter 4 offers a demographic overview of the 23 Black male participants, including demographic analysis and biographical sketches. In chapter 5, the study findings are discussed in detail, including the threats to college completion, protective factor deployment to neutralize risks, and the role of the HSI in promoting participants' academic achievement and attainment. Additionally, this chapter illustrates how various intersecting facets of identity shape their resilience, and highlights their success-based counter-narratives. Chapter 6 provides the study conclusions, implications for practice, and based

on the research findings of the current study, recommendations for future research on Black college men.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the purpose of this study which is to unearth the specific conditions for and describing the process of academic resilience and success experiences of Black males who are completing a college education at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Specifically, this study seeks to understand how Black male collegians academic resilience experiences and the influences of socioeconomic status, race, and gender. Chapter 2 is divided into three major sections. The first section provides an analysis of the research examining various protective factors that promote Black male achievement and attainment with foci on Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with a glimpse into Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). This section explores how protective factors affecting engagement, achievement, and attainment converge and diverge explaining commonalities and conflicts per institutional setting (Cuyjet, 2006; Gasman, 2008; Strayhorn 2008a). Educational responses to Black male attainment are likely to be ill conceived if “experiential insights are only derived from Black men who do not achieve” (Harper, 2009a, p. 709). Hence, a thematically organized synthesis of recommendations by, and ultimately across, institutional types provides evidence for broadening the scope and depth of studies on African American male attainment.

Gleaned from the review of literature in section one of chapter 2 is the resilience of historically disenfranchised Black male collegians notwithstanding microaggressive, racialized, conservative and sexist educational milieus. Thus, sections two and three are informed by the findings throughout the success-based scholarship and provide a discussion of Resilience

concepts, and introduction to Critical Race Theory (CRT) the analytical framework for this research, respectively. The varying definitions of Resilience throughout the literature are provided along with conceptual underpinnings and a review of the literature in regard to resilience in postsecondary educational settings is conducted. Given that this research endeavors to understand the process of resilience as it relates to Black male collegians' success, various resilience process models are illustrated. Critical Race Theory serves as the means of analysis for this study providing a tool to examine how race, gender, and social class converge within the counter-narratives of Black college males (Howard, 2008; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The discussion of CRT as an analytical framework includes its history, tenets, and an overview of CRT literature in education.

Anatomy of the Conversation on Black Male Success via Institutional Context

Walter Allen's (1992) seminal work "The Color of Success: African American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White (PWI) and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities (HBCU)", and Shaun Harper's (2012a) recent research publication, *Black Male Student Success in Higher Education: A Report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*, serve as points of departure for this section of the review. Allen (1992), in a national study of 1,800 Black students (872 attending PWIs, and 928 enrolled at HBCUs), investigated how students' backgrounds, campus experiences (racial composition/ unity), and individual personality orientations were associated with outcomes connected to academic achievement, social involvement, and occupational aspirations (p. 28). Utilizing survey data from the *National Study of Black College Students (NSBCS)*, this quantitative, multivariate study found that a combination of individual and institutional characteristics was a major predictor of outcomes in these three areas (p. 39). Findings suggest that a student's interpretation of, and

reaction to, the stressors associated within an institutional setting determined level of success. Considering these findings, when the predictor of campus racial composition was incorporated, students at HBCUs outgained their counterparts attending PWIs as measured by the three outcomes. Ultimately, previous research findings substantiate this assertion: Black students at PWIs experience microaggression that impedes their achievement, in comparison to the supportive HBCU campuses that cultivate Black collegians' success (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Fleming, 1981, 1984; Nettles, 1988).

Twenty years later, Harper (2012a) contributed to Allen's (1992) discussion, centering on success factors across institutional context, through a qualitative study documenting 219 Black males' academic achievement at 43 colleges and universities across 20 states. Adding a voice to the quantitative data, and departing from the tendency of framing the retention of Black male students from a deficit model, the study sought to explore institutional programs, peer and familial relationships, and the effects of individual prowess in garnering social capital in support of the participant's academic goals. Through a series of individual interviews and focus groups, via the anti-deficit achievement framework³, Black men in Harper's (2012a) study shared the factors attributed to their success' which included: their ability to successfully navigate racially charged campus environments, becoming engaged on campus through leadership opportunities, the development of meaningful relationships with peers and mentors, and receiving ample familial and spiritual support. Some participants also correlated college transition and/or pre-college programs, and scholarship opportunities with their retention, achievement, and attainment.

³ Informed by three decades of literature on Black men in education and society, as well as theories from sociology, psychology, gender studies, and education. The framework inverts questions that are commonly asked about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition (p.5).

These two seminal studies work in tandem, to help frame the conversation on Black male postsecondary success within this section. Allen (1992), states that “ a major challenge confronting U.S. higher education is how best to replicate and expand examples of Black student college success” (p. 41). Harper (2012a) responds through an analysis of the lived experiences of successful Black male collegians, scrutinizing the factors – institutional and internal – attributable to their achievement. Utilizing these studies as a point of departure, the present review opens with an analysis of the literature on Black male success at PWIs.

Black Male Success at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)

The majority of studies on Black men have examined the population’s negative experiences at PWIs, concentrating on the impact of racial battleground fatigue⁴ (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Although Allen (1992) argued that Black students experience significant racial microaggression and lack of support services at PWIs, Harper (2012c) contended that Black men have indeed persisted and excelled within this institutional context, despite existing institutional impediments. The following section reviews the literature on Black male success at PWIs. While serving as emissaries, the achievers within this institutional setting have often displayed strong self-efficacy and engagement, leveraging peers, family, mentors, and spirituality, along their journey to success (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006b, 2009a; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010).

Moore, Madison-Colomore, and Smith (2003) support the findings of both Allen (1992) and Harper (2012a) in their qualitative study of 24 high-achieving engineering majors within a racially microaggressive PWI. These researchers explored the internal and external factors attributed to the participant’s achievement and persistence as STEM majors. Through an analysis

⁴ Psychological stress responses including frustration, shock, anger, disappointment, resentment, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and fear due to consistent racial hostility.

of data obtained via biographical questionnaires, individual, and focus group interviews, Moore et al.'s (2003) grounded theory approach unearthed that a "prove-them-wrong" coping mechanism was utilized by these men. Explained by researchers as a psychological response to a majoritarian view of Black intellectual inferiority, this "prove-them-wrong" impulse was observed among participants through the adoption of a hyper-assertive academic posture (p. 67). These men exhibited a deep self-efficacy with regard to academics, and reported being successful in their persistent efforts to engage with faculty members. Although the researchers succeed in framing Black male achievement using a new concept, they fall short by neglecting to expand on the discussion of possible psychological repercussions resulting from this coping mechanism (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002).

Similar to participants in the Moore et al. (2003) study, the men in Harper's (2009a) study countered negative perceptions through the pursuit of academic excellence, and intentional campus involvement as leaders, while serving as social agents to other Black males. In a study of high achievers, Harper (2009a) implemented a Critical Race Theory Counter-Narrative method to reveal how Black male collegians at PWIs respond to and reject racist stereotyping (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The researcher discovered that 143 participants across 30 PWIs reported a strong understanding of negative majoritarian views of Black males. Practicing the "prove-them-wrong" behavior, they refused to practice social distancing to oppose campus racism, alternatively developing meaningful, supportive relationships. Their strong belief in their abilities coupled with same-race peer encouragement was a major factor in the persistence of these students. These findings on positive peer support are also found in Harper's (2006b) qualitative study of 32 Black male undergraduates at six Big Ten conference universities in the Midwest. Harper (2006b) sought to identify the roles played by Black male peers, the channels

peer support is obtained, and if there was any supporting evidence of Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) "acting white"⁵ hypothesis, and internalized racism among Black male collegians (p. 341). During interviews, participants recounted that they intentionally accessed healthy peer relations through memberships in fraternities, campus clubs, and by attending orientation programs; peer interaction and support was recognized as significantly enriching to their collegiate experiences. Moreover, these students leveraged their campus involvement as a means of advancing Black student concerns on their respective campuses. Much like the Black men in Moore et al. (2003) and Harper (2009a), high self-efficacy and strong Black identity was prevalent in the men who successfully navigated the microaggressive environments in which they studied and lived.

Unlike those in Harper's (2006b) research, participants in Bridges' (2010), study conducted at a Southeastern PWI, practiced psychological distancing to combat discriminatory campus practices known to impede success. Six men who participated in three focus groups revealed that they deemed the campus (which had experienced significant historical racial tension) unwelcoming to Blacks. To navigate the environment, these men ignored intolerance by practicing psychological distancing, and fortified their sense of identity by reflecting upon the accomplishments of their race, ultimately, self-motivating themselves to persist. The psychological impact of this practice may be detrimental – one participant exclaimed they he was "definitely changed" by his experiences, and additionally affirmed a need to "put up kind of a wall" (p.24). Although informative, Bridges (2010) missed the opportunity to explore this statement further, address ramifications (if any) associated with this distancing strategy, such as

⁵ Fordham & Ogbu (1986) contend that academically successful Black students must cope with the burden of being constantly accused of "acting White" (assuming culture aspects and personality traits attributable to White Americans) by their peers.

issues with race relations experienced after graduation. Since five of the six men in the study were born and raised in the home state of the institution, they viewed the school as a microcosm of the larger surrounding environment (Bridges, 2010). To fully understand the effects of this coping strategy, it would be useful to examine whether a similar approach is prevalent in Black men from differing demographic backgrounds.

Black men are not a monolithic group, and not all Black college men at PWIs experience those environments in the same way. Some develop meaningful relationships among same-race peers, while others prefer familial support, or integrated peer relations. Williamson (2010) found that African and Caribbean men described significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their overall academic experiences in comparison to their African American counterparts. Williamson's (2010) mixed methods study of 99 Black males majoring in STEM fields at a PWI examined data gathered from the Academic Integration Scale, and individual interviews, through the lenses of Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance⁶. African American men were deemed as having the lowest levels of engagement with faculty. Interestingly, despite ethnicity, all participants recognized family as being "a pivotal force" in their educational success and instrumental in sharing encouragement and resources. This finding refutes Ogbu and Simons' (1998) hypothesis that African Americans receive less encouragement and support to succeed in college than non-voluntary minorities (p.64). Unlike in the studies by Moore et al. (2003), Harper (2006a, 2009a), and Bridges (2010), the men in Williamson's (2010) study practiced Black Distancing – they elected not to interact, and therefore did not benefit from supportive *same-race peer* relationships. However, family interaction played a meaningful role in their success, suggesting that supportive relationships for

⁶ Hypothesizes that a minority's educational views and experiences are directly related to the way in which they became a minority, coupled with community and family educational values, impacts academic achievement (p. 45).

Black males at PWIs are a critical component to their achievement whether those relationships are forged with family or friends.

In contrast to Williamson's (2010) results, Strayhorn (2008b) looked at data from the College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) and concluded that Black men who socialized with peers from various races and ethnicities were likely to exhibit a stronger sense of belonging to the campus. Campus engagement is known to be associated with academic success a concept reinforced by the literature on Black males (Strayhorn, 2008b, p. 503). For example, Hébert (2002) conducted a 4-year longitudinal case study examining five Black males at a predominately white flagship institution in the southeastern U.S. The study investigated how Black males perceive their own levels of academic achievement, what relationships they found most supportive, and the impact of the campus on their successes and failures. Comparable to the participants in the Williamson (2010) and Strayhorn (2008b) studies, the men in Hébert's (2002) longitudinal study identified family and an integrated support group as factors positively influencing their academic success. These young men revealed that their talents were recognized at an early age and nurtured by a mentor, often beginning in elementary school and persisting through postsecondary education, a factor that assisted in the cultivation of their self-efficacy. Involvement in religious organizations is also connected to these findings on familial support. These students recalled church celebrations in honor of their educational accomplishments.

In addition to familial and peer support, Black men at PWIs embrace spirituality as a success factor. Herndon (2003) affirmed that Black college males receive support from various sources, including those that are academic, emotional, social, and financial (p. 77). However, given the role of spirituality and religion in the Black community, many African American males value spiritual and religious support as a dynamic impacting their success. In examining the role

of spirituality in reinforcing the persistence of Black male collegians, Herndon's (2003) study of thirteen men from a Mid-Atlantic PWI gleaned rich data via semi-structured interviews explaining how spirituality affects their ability to stay in school (p. 78). The young men in the study reported using prayer and worship as a means of coping, relieving stress, and facing racism. For these men, church members provided guidance and encouragement, while spirituality offered structure for their lives. Based on Herndon's (2003) findings it can be inferred that Black male recipients of spiritual guidance and familial support, are more likely to experience success. Relationships are complex, and when juxtaposed to the dynamics of a campus setting become increasingly difficult to predict their outcomes. However, successful Black college men find ways to leverage relationships to their advantage – including their *relationships* with a higher power that may indeed strengthen self-efficacy (Herndon, 2003).

The previous section offered a sampling of success-based empirical research on Black male collegians at PWIs. Apparent in the findings are the overwhelmingly non-cognitive factors associated with resilience, including spirituality. The ability to develop relationships was identified as a substantial success strategy within this institutional setting. In addition, confidence and a strong self-identity allowed the Black men in the reviewed studies to successfully engage in unwelcoming communities while developing and sustaining purposeful peer, familial, spiritual, and mentor relationships.

One theme that appears throughout the literature is the premise that the PWI campus ethos neglects the empirically proven needs of Black males. However, Museus (2011) found that some PWIs specifically those, described as Generating Ethnic Minority Success (GEMS) institutions, show considerably higher than average minority retention and graduation rates. GEMS institutions are PWIs that feature considerably higher than average minority retention and

graduation rates. According to Museus (2011), the GEMS colleges in his study possess salient networking principals and are intentional in developing “targeted support” programs, are successful at “humanizing the educational experience” for all campus constituencies, and instill an “ethos characterized by institutional responsibility”. Ultimately, GEMS are proactive in creating a supportive environment for minority students yielding positive outcomes. The features characteristic to GEMS colleges are comparable to those resulting from the long-standing mission and traditions of HBCUs, and show a similar impact on Black male success. The next section explores this context in detail, illuminating the literature on Black male success at HBCUs.

Black Male Success at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Allen (1992) postulated that Black students, like many individuals, are more successful in environments where they feel valued (p. 39). Harper (2012b) added that essential features separating successful Black males from their counterparts are encounters with individuals and/or motivational experiences of cultural pertinence. Consisting of 105 institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States enroll 11% and graduate nearly 20% of the total number of African American undergraduate students (Aud et al., 2012; Palmer & Wood, 2012b). The amended Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 defines HBCUs, as

...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation. (The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, n.d.)

These institutions offer a campus ethos that is rich in collectivist cultural values, and maintain a cultural integrity evident in their engagement and support programming (Museus, 2011).

However, according to Palmer and Wood (2012b), Black male attainment at HBCUs has declined by 6% in a single decade (1997-2007), and is currently hovering at 29% in contrast with the 57% graduation rate of female counterparts. While this disparity is grievous, there is an important story to be told by the 29% - that of successful Black males attending HBCUs. This section looks to understand this story by reviewing studies on Black male success at HBCUs.

While the institutional settings differ, the student needs endure. Similar to Black males at PWIs, collegians at HBCUs also possess self-efficacy and seek opportunities to engage with the campus community; and like their PWI counterparts, they also identify protective factors, inclusive of familial and peer relationships, as being valuable (Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Fries-Britt, Burt, & Franklin, 2012; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Coupled with a prevalent spiritual base, the strategies utilized by students at HBCUs are generally comparable (Riggins, McNeal, & Herndon, 2008; Watson, 2006); however, their experiences indeed diverge as the students at PWIs experience the psychosomatic impact of racial battle fatigue, while those at HBCUs do not.

Fries-Britt, Burt, and Franklin (2012) conducted a qualitative study investigating the experiences and challenges of 44 Black males in STEM programs at HBCUs. The researchers found that establishing strong relationships with faculty, administrators, and program peers was critical to the persistence and graduation of these students (p. 81). Similar to Moore et al. (2003), the STEM majors in this study found peer interaction to be an indispensable factor in achieving success. However, the need to “force” relationships with the faculty members was absent as they experienced ease interacting with professors, who actually initiated contact with students. Also,

the Black Distancing practiced by men in Williamson's (2010) study was non-existent among the males in Fries-Britt et al. (2012) study. A comparative analysis of these studies reveals the tension experienced by students at PWIs. Entering STEM fields alone is a challenging endeavor; factor in uninterested faculty only intensifies the struggle. While both groups succeed in college, the level of exertion engaging faculty for HBCU students in this study was a non-factor.

Flowers (2012) found through a qualitative case study of senior engineering majors at an HBCU that Black men too had strong self-efficacy; however, these young men indicated that this self-efficacy was influenced by the supportive nature of the institution and faculty. Men at the HBCU acknowledged that the Deans of their respective programs, advisors, and faculty were engaged and often provided networking opportunities. They described how the availability of support programs assisted them in gaining the skills and ultimately the confidence they needed to achieve their academic goals. Similar to the studies by Williamson (2010) and Hebert (2002), Flowers' (2012) research revealed that family was a major resource for students. And much like the men in Herndon's (2003) work, many of these men expressed a strong spiritual base acknowledging the role God played in their academic talent.

According to Riggins, McNeal, and Herndon's (2008) qualitative study of 13 Black men at HBCUs, prayer was utilized as a coping strategy in support of their persistence and achievement. These findings align with those of Herndon (2003); however, Riggins et al.'s (2008) study resulted in two unique outcomes. First, HBCU students were comfortable enough in their setting to verbally express their spirituality, engaging in faith-based conversations with peers and faculty. Second, these men attested that although they called on a higher power in times of need, they believed themselves to be solely responsible for particular life outcomes, whether positive or negative. These men valued their self-efficacy and were comparable to the

participants in Bridges' (2010) study, with one divergence – they supplemented their talents with prayer.

Watson's (2006) quantitative study also gathered data about spirituality and its relationship to the educational experiences and survival/success of 97 Black males at an HBCU. Watson (2006) found that spirituality was important to their success; however, these participants' interpretation of survival differed. At PWIs, Black male collegians employed prayer to assist in the navigation of the racist environment and the academic life of college. The men in Watson's (2006) research, however, primarily prayed for guidance and support in managing aspects of traditional college life (relationships, academics, and finances) – areas with established institutional support mechanisms at the HBCU.

Supporting the idea that institutional support is a vital feature of Black male success, Palmer and Strayhorn (2008) conducted a study examining the outcomes of 11 academically underprepared men enrolled in an educational support program. The men in Palmer and Strayhorn's (2008) study graduated despite their academic shortcomings, and self-efficacy was found to be a major factor in the attainment of this group. The 11 men reported that the program, helped them become accountable for their success, to concentrate and organize themselves properly, and to “develop and display an affinity for a major” (p. 136). Similarly, Fountaine and Carter (2012) studied one HBCU's implementation of a bridge program, which was designed to support academically underprepared students by utilizing the strengths-based educational model, as opposed to traditional remediation efforts. The results of this quantitative study indicated that all 233 participants experienced positive gains in academic achievement.

The findings from these studies speak volumes to the importance of support programming for Black men who enter postsecondary education underprepared. The participants

from each study reported having confidence in their abilities, similar to the academically prepared participants in the Bridges (2010), Harper (2009a), and Hebert (2002) studies at PWIs. These findings are closely related to resilience theory protective factor, self-efficacy.

Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) conducted a qualitative study to identify experiences that challenged and supported the academic success of 34 students: 19 enrolled at an HBCU and 15 from a PWI. The majority of the HBCU cohort transferred in from a PWI as a result of dissatisfaction with the original school. While Black men attending PWIs are found to fare better academically than their often underprepared HBCU counterparts, Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) observed comparable levels of success for each cohort (PWI and HBCU), and greater levels of satisfaction among the HBCU students (Davis, 1994). This finding is generally representative of the literature reviewed herein, suggesting that institutional support has great potential to yield academic success for Black males.

Black male success is prevalent across institutional types. However, while the HBCU offers Black men a more supportive engaging environment, which allows the population to become fully immersed academically and socially, some HBCU campus cultures are hostile toward particular Black men (Palmer & Wood, 2012a). As stated previously, Black men are not a monolithic group – and neither are HBCUs one-size-fits-all institutions. For instance, Strayhorn and Scott (2012) examined the experiences of Black gay men at HBCUs; looking specifically at the challenges this group confronts both internally and externally. Gay Black men face encounters with homophobia, campus-wide invisibility and marginalization, and in some instances lack of familial support, and issues of identification. Similar to men in Williamson's (2010) study, they are routinely subjected to Black Distancing on the campuses of conservative HBCUs. According to Strayhorn and Scott (2012), Black gay men at HBCUs often view the

college environment as unwelcoming and feel that the historical religious foundation of such institutions perpetuates a conservative campus climate. Harper and Gasman (2008) concurred, as their study on sexual orientation, self-expression, and subordination found a distinct political conservatism at some HBCUs.

The experiences and coping strategies for these men at HBCUs are, ironically, similar to Black men at PWIs. Homosexual males at HBCUs navigate the homophobic and/or heterosexist campus communities by establishing relationships with external peers. In addition, many of them practice psychological and physical distancing – electing to live off-campus, and becoming engaged with the external community-based LGBT organizations. Strayhorn and Scott (2012), and Harper and Gasman (2008) reported that the support these men garner outside the walls of their respective institutions assist their persistence and achievement. Missing from this study is a descriptive analysis of the process of identifying off-campus support units. For instance, how does a gay freshman from New York attending a HBCU in Alabama cope with transitioning to college while simultaneously engaging in the process of identifying external campus support in a conservative state? Understanding this population's progression from identification of risk, to analysis, to action would assist student affairs, counseling, and LGBT professionals with much needed support program development.

While Black college men are largely examined from the perspective of HBCUs and/or PWIs, researchers have expanded the breadth and scope of studies on Black males from an institutional context including community colleges, religious affiliated institutions, and Ivy League institutions (Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012). Central to the current study are the experiences of successful Black males at HSIs, while there is a dearth in

studies addressing this phenomenon, the next section of this review will highlight recent studies aimed at understanding student success at Hispanic Serving Institutions.

A Glimpse into Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

The amended Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 formally recognized Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in 1992. The Department of Education's (2011) Title V of the HEA of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1101a(a)(5), defines a HSI as:

An institution of higher education that (a) is an eligible institution; (b) at the time of application, has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students; and (c) provides assurances that not less than 50 percent of the institution's Hispanic students are low-income individuals. (The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, n.d.)

Since being legally recognized by Congress in 1992, the 356 Hispanic Serving Institutions account for ten percent of all postsecondary institutions; and enroll over 55% of all Latino college goers and more than 20% of additional ethnic populations. (Aud et al., 2012; Gasman, 2008; HACU, 2013). According to Li and Carroll (2007), 10% of undergraduate African American students are enrolled at Hispanic Serving Institutions in comparison to 13% enrolled at HBCUs. However, unlike their HBCU counterparts, HSIs' designation is based primarily on their enrollment, a corollary of institutional proximity to Hispanic populations in the Southwest, West, Florida, New York and New Jersey. For example, of the nearly 400 HSIs only four: Boricua College, Hostos Community College, St. Augustine College – an independent, religious, bilingual (dual-language) institution located in Illinois, and the National Hispanic University have missions that claim their unique status as Latino serving (Laden, 2001). Albeit not specified predominately within their missions, some HSIs' commitment to Hispanic students

has been evident within its programming focused on counteracting the under preparedness, financial hardship, and immigration quandaries of Hispanic students (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005). Moreover, lobbying entities such as the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) have championed financial support for HSIs via campaigns for increased federal appropriations, which in fiscal year 2012 totaled approximately \$229 million; an increase of \$217 million from fiscal year 1995.

HSIs serve a valuable function of educating the fastest growing population in the U.S. – Hispanics – and are therefore poised to become leaders in workforce development and immigration policy reform (Hurtado & Saenz, 2006). Hispanics represent the youngest minority with a purchasing power anticipated to reach \$1.5 trillion by the year 2015 (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2013). Yet, as of 2010 Hispanics own one of the lowest enrollment rates of 18 to 24 year-olds in degree granting postsecondary institutions (44%), and account for less than 10% of the bachelor degrees conferred in 2010 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Many of the students attending HSIs hail from low socioeconomic backgrounds and therefore are at risk of being affected by many of the ills associated with their statuses – social ills that often strain the resources of institutions of higher education. Therefore, researchers have sought to develop studies that identify strategies, profiles, and predictors of success vital to the survival of HSIs and their students.

For instance, at the HSI Texas A & M University-Kingsville a quantitative study of 900 first-year freshmen students was conducted by Williams (2004) to determine what predictors impacted academic achievement and retention. The six predictors being investigated included ACT/SAT scores; high school class rank; foundation course grades; participation in a recommended or distinguished high school curriculum; membership in a living-learning

community; and emotional intelligence skill level. Williams (2004) discovered that emotional intelligence items – drive strength, time management, and commitment shared a significant relationship with retention, *commitment ethic* was the “strongest predictor of retention;” and the non-cognitive Emotional Intelligence (EC) item *time management* was found to predict academic achievement (p. 8). These non-cognitive factors were found to impact student success significantly more than academic based variables. These findings align with a recurring theme throughout the success based literature on Black males at PWIs and HBCUs which include the strong influence of non-cognitive protective factors: confidence, self-efficacy, and internal locus of control – variables all associated with Emotional Intelligence. The relationship between student success and Emotional Intelligence (EC) will be discussed further in a latter section of this review examining resilience.

Comparable to the work of Williams (2004), Kaufman, Agars, and Lopez-Wagner (2008) conducted a study of first-year, non-traditional HSI students, examining personality and motivation as predictors of first-quarter success based on GPA. Kaufman et al.’s (2008) quantitative study of 315 (80% female) largely non-traditional Asian American, Black, White, Hispanic, and other students discovered that first-quarter school success was determined by high levels of *conscientiousness*, and *intrinsic motivation*. Kaufman et al. (2008) acknowledged that the results are similar to findings from research examining traditional populations at PWIs. The researcher also suggested that given the results Hispanic Serving Institutions should make an effort to design organization skills building programs to enhance time management.

While nearly 80% of the participants in Kaufman et al. (2008) study were women attending an HSI, Wolf-Wendel’s (2000) study aimed to identify “women-friendly campuses” and the benefits provided to female students. Wolf-Wendel (2000) asserted that there is a

significant body of evidence that “special-focus” institutions such as single-sex PWIs, HBCUs and HSIs have been traditionally supportive to women – and that they have performed better at these institutions than coed PWIs. Wolf-Wendel (2000) conducted a qualitative study interviewing successful female students to unearth the institutional factors contributable to women’s success at a total of five, select HSIs, PWIs, and HBCUs. Eight factors were identified across each of the institutional settings including:

1. Having high academic expectations
2. Having a clear sense of mission and history
3. Providing positive role models
4. Creating a caring, supportive environment
5. Providing opportunities for leadership
6. Providing opportunities to learn about oneself
7. Creating a supportive and high-achieving peer culture of people like oneself
8. Connecting students to their communities. (p. 325)

The factors listed share distinct similarities with the HBCUs identified earlier in this review. For example, the campus ethos at HBCUs maintains an encouraging atmosphere, which is accepting of the cultural values and experiences of Black students. Likewise, the women participants attending an HSI in Wolf-Wendel’s (2000) study also indicated that their institutions facilitated lasting, meaningful mentoring relationships with faculty and staff members. Findings from this study indicate that whether mission driven or part of the campus culture/ historical foundations, institutions that overtly concentrate their efforts on the success of female students help to empower women. Wolf-Wendel (2000) exclaimed, “Differences in race, ethnicity, social

class, and other experiences influence what students need from their campuses and how campuses should respond.” This contention is similar to the approach taken by HBCUs.

Nelson Laird et al. (2007) posited that while there is not a large body of work examining the impact of HSIs on Latino students, there is enough evidence to intimate that HSIs are similar to HBCUs in their ability to support student attainment, although not to the extent of a mission driven HBCU. In a quantitative study examining National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) responses from 2,896 Black college seniors enrolled at 334 PWIs, and 1,852 Black seniors enrolled at 20 HBCUs compared to 2,149 Hispanic seniors from 321 PWIs, and 2,028 Hispanic seniors from 26 HSIs, Nelson et al. (2007) investigated whether Latino students at HSIs were supported in an identical fashion as Black students at HBCUs. The research yielded findings similar to Allen (1992), in that Black students at HBCUs reported a higher level of engagement than their PWI counterparts, while Latino students at HSIs reported identical to slightly *lower* levels of academic engagement than those attending PWIs. However, the average Latino at the HSI reported slightly higher increases in their overall development, and described their campuses as being supportive (p. 49). Nelson et al. (2007) correlated the findings on Hispanic seniors at HSIs (being similar to their PWI counterparts) to the schools’ historically predominantly white foundations, and their brief existence as Hispanic Serving, culturally sensitive institutions. Nelson et al. (2007) suggested that unlike the HSI in Wolf-Wendel’s (2000) research there has not been “shifts in culture” within the institutions in their study nor comprehensive strategies aimed to support Latino student success (p. 51). Ultimately, the HSIs examined in Nelson et al. (2007) study behave much like PWIs rendering the experiences of Latino students at both institutional settings identical.

In the only study identified by this researcher that specifically examines the experiences of Black males at Hispanic Serving Institutions, Reddick et al. (2012) also found the experiences of Black men at an HSI to be closely related to their counterparts at PWIs. Through focus groups, this qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Black males at a Hispanic serving institution in Central Texas, where the Black male population is equivalent to less than 2% of the overall population (5,293). Specifically, the study sought to identify how the participants describe their experiences with engagement on the campus, residing on campus, and “interacting with diverse populations” including other Black men (p. 193).

Three themes emerged from the study:

- Theme 1: The Benefits of an HSI and Black-Hispanic relations
- Theme 2: The HSI is still a PWI
- Theme 3: Relying on the Small Community of Black Males and Faculty Allies.

(p. 195)

The Black men in the Reddick et al. (2012) study revealed a tepid relationship with Latinos, albeit solidarity arose with the acquisition of indirect benefits from Latino focused programming and a sense of “camaraderie”, particularly in instances of campus based racial tension. Racial tensions have existed throughout the world between myriad racial/ethnic groups for centuries. This finding indicates the presence of Inter-minority conflict⁷. Inter-minority conflict has been found to be prevalent between Blacks and Hispanics particularly in regard to allocation of resources, evident during the early protest of HBCUs against federal funding of HSIs (MacDonald & Garcia, 2003; Morris, 2000).

⁷ Inter-minority conflict theory predicts: (1) the spatial proximity of ethnic/racial groups is directly related to animosity between the groups and (2) inter-minority animosity will be greatest among the poorest segments of the population (Morris, 2000, p. 77).

Only one participant in the study was aware of the institutions HSI status, and each of the Black men perceived the college to be a PWI as they navigated various campus-based microaggressions. These men depended upon the support of a minuscule community of Black male peers and ally professors to navigate isolation in courses and majors. Paradoxically, they also disclosed practicing social distancing from African students and Black gay male students.

Nelson et al. (2007) and Reddick et al. (2012) agree that based on the results of their studies they find that HSIs possess “intersectional identities”, that in the case of Black men at HSIs help to taint their experiences (Reddick et al., 2012, p. 203).

The research in the preceding review highlighted the variety of factors that advance the achievement, persistence, and attainment of Black male collegians at PWIs, and HBCUs and also provide insight into student success at HSIs. Based upon the findings, several research and programming recommendations are offered in the ensuing section.

Synthesis of Recommendations Across Institutional Type

This section synthesizes key recommendations, within the current literature review, across institutional type. The recommendations are organized by the following themes:

Facilitating Peer Relations, Campus Engagement, and Institutionalized Support Programming.

This section intends to inform campus policies and practice, innovative research, and data-driven programming that facilitates Black male success.

Facilitating peer relations and familial support. Across institutional type, many of the men in this review identified peer support as essential to their success. In an effort to increase outlets for peer interaction for Black males at PWIs, Harper (2006a) calls for increased monetary and political support of predominantly Black clubs and fraternities. These outlets attract Black males and provide a positive structure for social interaction. A spillover effect of these

organizations is increased student participation in community service initiatives that benefit the campus and external communities. Harper (2006a) also recommends the development of campus-based conferences and sub-meetings to address racial issues and promote unity. Strayhorn (2008b) suggested that the development of thematic learning and living communities with programming aimed at developing peer relationships and collectivist cultures. He adds that faculty members play an essential role in developing peer relations through classroom interaction, asserting that faculty must be trained to understand the dynamics of peer interaction, and how to integrate such dynamics into the curriculum.

Williamson (2010) advocates for cultivation of peer interactions to include family programming in order to facilitate connections to this protective factor. Programming initiatives could include campus family days, cookouts, sporting events, and thematic socials. These kinds of events increase family involvement and engage both external support units and the students themselves with the campus community. Like Williamson (2010), Hébert (2002) found that family support was an integral component to the success of the Black men in his study. However, he advised Black families and communities to cultivate self-efficacy in Black males *prior to* their enrollment in college by seeking to identify and cultivate talents early. Hébert (2002) recommends that academic major departments create mentoring programs geared to assist Black males. Also, through campus Centers for Teaching and Learning, faculty members could participate in cultural sensitivity training Hébert (2002) adds that counseling should be made readily available to students and be provided by minority psychologist.

Campus engagement. Bridges (2010) recommends the hiring of tenure-track Black faculty at PWIs. The mere presence of Black faculty members in the classroom setting can ease the anxieties of Black males, allowing them to shed their defensive postures within the academic

environment, focusing their energies on academic success. Black men must be provided with specific coping strategies. Moore, Madison-Colomore, and Smith's (2003) study highlighting the prove-them-wrong syndrome is a relatively new concept requiring more research to understand the phenomenon. While many Black men were found to practice prove-them-wrong, what is particularly unknown in regard to the concept is the existence of any negative developmental outcomes as result of practicing this coping strategy. Faculty must also be trained to understand stereotype threat and how Black males react to situations that threaten their intelligence (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) suggested that campus-based institutional researchers provide assessments of the campus environment to ensure the campus ethos is inclusive and supportive of Black males. Fries-Britt and Turner's (2002) suggestion is shared by Harper and Gasman (2008) and Strayhorn and Scott (2012), in regard to their studies on gay Black men at HBCUs. The campus climate at some HBCUs is just as unwelcoming, and even dangerous, particular in instances where Black gay men have suffered bias attacks; similar to their heterosexual counterparts at PWIs. More research is also needed on Black gay men in college who suffer "issues of identification" by rejecting their sexual identities.

Given the separation of church and State, the exploration of spirituality on State and community college campuses in the U.S. is complex. Nonetheless, Herndon (2003), Riggins et al. (2008), and Watson (2006) call for programming that provide Black males at HBCUs and PWIs with opportunities to explore and celebrate their spirituality, as religious based student clubs and organizations serve as an ideal outlet for Black males to practice their faith.

Institutionalized support programming. An important characteristic in the facilitation of Black male success is access to academic support (Wood, Hilton & Lewis, 2012). Palmer and Strayhorn (2008) and Fountaine and Carter (2012) propose the development of programming that

strengthens academic skill sets, and self-efficacy; and the utilization of strengths-based remedial programming, respectively. Palmer and Strayhorn (2008) suggested that institutional leaders support non-cognitive “journaling exercises in academic skills workshop to put learning in the “hands” of students” (p. 138).

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the Latino Student Success at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) demonstration project, endeavored to develop “greater understanding about institutional leadership and practices that promote Latino student success at six HSIs” (Santiago, Andrade, & Brown, 2004, p. 1). The study recommended that Hispanic Serving Institutions must make a concerted effort to support the academic success of Hispanic students while simultaneously keeping other populations engaged and fulfilled academically. Also, there are a host of non-traditional students that attend HSIs; therefore, the descriptors of success must be expanded beyond the traditional measures of attainment and retention to include “time to degree” and “value added” as indicators of student success and institutional effectiveness (Santiago et al., 2004, p. 8; Wood, Hilton & Lewis, 2012). These indicators take into account the experiences of students at HSIs and help institutions frame intentionality and shed ambiguity as it relates to their HSI statuses.

The preceding section provided a sampling of recommendations identified throughout this review of the literature on Black male success, inclusive of structural changes HSIs should seek to implement to support student success. The recommendations are perhaps not feasible or appropriate for all institutional settings or every Black college male; nonetheless in context may prove beneficial and impactful. The next section explicitly discusses the concept of resilience.

Appearing throughout the success based literature, it is imperative that educational resilience studies are discussed and various treatments of the concept described.

Resilience Definitions and Concepts

Morales and Trotman (2011) noted that resilient students are the “statistical elite” those who defy the dreadful educational outcomes associated with their historically underprivileged socio-economic status (p. 1). By the definition, then, the academically successful Black males appearing in the literature are resilient and “statistically elite;” while many of their counterparts have failed to matriculate through college, these men have excelled. Many of the ills that plague Black men are associated with a lower socioeconomic status inherited from the history of American slavery, a detriment that has unfortunately become ingrained in the nation’s social fiber and institutions. Therefore, understanding resilience and its concepts allows researchers, educators, policy makers, and parents to consider an additional theoretical basis on which to formulate effective studies, policy, and educational programs to further support Black male academic success.

The current study is concerned with the concept of resilience as a process, and how within that process Black men recognize, select, and access protective factors that assist in the modification of threats that could potentially lead to detrimental educational outcomes at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) (Luthar, 2006; Richardson, 2002; Rutter, 1985; Walker, Gleaves & Grey, 2006). However, while there is much data explaining the factors that led to their adaptation and endurance, little explication is offered on the systematic action of accessing those resources – thus contributing an incomplete illustration of resilience. This section helps to clarify resilience by reviewing the literature related to the concept and provides insight into its definitions, models, and applications.

Resilience is defined as the constructive response to threat. Consisting of two basic concepts, those of risk and positive adaptation, resilience provides an anti-deficit approach that seeks to examine the process of adjustment and/or recovery via the reduction of risk influences. This is accomplished through the application of protective factors (Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1987). Threats are inclusive of both internal and external variety, i.e., low-socioeconomic status, abusive living situations, and emotional disturbance. A positive response (in context of the individual or situation) involves a return to normalcy or enduring the difficulty altogether (Rutter, 1985; Werner, 1993). Return to normalcy or reintegration is made possible through the retrieval and deployment of protective factors (see Table 1) categorized as: Individual, Family, and Social Environment Levels (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2006; Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodick, & Sawyer, 2003; Werner, 1993).

Table 1

Psychological Factors Associated with Resilience (from Olsson et al., 2003, pp. 5 – 6)

	Resources	Protective Mechanism	Select Authors	
Individual Level	Constitutional Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Temperament Robust Neurobiology 	Werner (1995) Allen (1998)	Garmezy (1991) Rutter (1987)
	Sociability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsiveness to others Pro-social Attitudes 	Luthar (1991) Werner (1995)	Allen (1998) Morales & Trotman (2011)
	Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Achievement Decision Making 	Eccles (1997) Wolff (1995)	Brooks (1994) Rutter (1987)
	Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed Language Advanced Reading 	Werner (1995)	Morales & Trotman (2011)
	Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-efficacy Internal Locus of Control 	Rutter (1987) Werner (1995)	Luthar (1991) Brooks (1994) Morales & Trotman (2011)
Family Level	Supportive Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohesion & care in family Talent valued by others Parental warmth, encouragement Non-Blaming 	Smith (1999) Eccles (1997) Wolff (1995)	Rutter (1987) Werner (1995) Morales & Trotman (2011)
Social Environment	SES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material Resourced 	Allen (1998)	Wolff (1995)
	School Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive Peers Positive Teacher Influences 	Werner (1995)	Rutter (1987)
	Supportive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes the individuals stress Non-punitive Provisions & Resources to assist Belief in the values of a society 	Werner (1995) Wolff (1995)	Smith (1999) Morales & Trotman (2011)

Individual level, and Family level protective factors are considered the first line of defense against adversity, and are primarily developed to counteract potential risk. Werner (1989) identified these factors as dispositional attributes (Olsson et al., 2003). Social environmental protective exist primarily in the schools and neighborhoods of adolescents where the expertise of teachers or administrators are tapped and supportive relationships of peers are leveraged to promote resilience (Garmezy, 1991; Olsson et al., 2003). Although the factors belonging to the three levels are prevalent throughout the literature, what must not be excluded from any conceptualization of resilience is the “recognition that there is huge heterogeneity in people’s responses to all manner of environmental adversities” (Rutter, 2012, p. 335). This premise recognizes ecology – as it relates to this study – aids in explaining the individual struggles and accomplishments of Black men in college in relation to their status as a group in American society.

Examining the resilience of Black male collegians – particularly from the perspective of a qualitative methodology, allows for the understanding of the internal and external adversity and stress that threatens their educational attainment. Moreover resilience study offers the opportunity to elicit the voices of Black men to explain how they navigated adversity in a specific cultural context. Ungar (2008) and Rutter (2006) distinguishes resilience as a process of “navigating” oneself toward, and then utilizing, a resource; thus, resilience is not accepted as an individual personality trait, given the influence of internal and external systems.

Despite varied definitions of resilience offered by theorists and researchers alike, prevalent in numerous definitions is the identification of resilience as a *process*. Luthar (2006) contends that the definition of resilience is somewhat oxymoronic – regarding its processes – in that “positive adaptation is manifested in life circumstances that usually lead to maladjustment”

(p. 739) and as a “phenomenon or process reflecting relatively positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (p. 742). Walker, Gleaves and Grey (2006) offer a two-pronged definition of resilience, characterizing it as both “the ability to *recover rapidly* from difficult situations” as well as being “the capacity to *endure ongoing* hardship in every conceivable way” (p. 251). Rutter’s (2006) concept of resilience recognizes the existence of potential risk within particular environments, defining resilience as “relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or the overcoming of stress or adversity” (p. 2). Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) describe resilience as consisting of a series of actions or “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (p. 425).

Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994, p. 46) offer a definition of resilience from an educational perspective, referring to resilience as, “the heightened *likelihood* of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences”. A misnomer within this definition is the word *likelihood*, which infers the *probability* of a successful outcome rendering this definition exceedingly vague in regard to the accepted concept of resilience. Yet, Morales and Trotman (2011) provide a more useful definition of academic resilience that aligns with the experiences of successful Black males within the literature reviewed earlier in the first section.

Like Masten et al. (1990), Morales and Trotman (2011) speak to the process of resilience, describing it as, “the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding” (p. 8). Morales and Trotman’s (2011) definition will serve as the operational definition of resilience for the purpose of this study. Their definition addresses the

current study's goals of identifying the process of resilience, and understanding Black male attainment as it relates to their overall collegiate experience. This definition addresses the plight of many Black men in college, acknowledging the poor attainment rates of the population as a group, while simultaneously recognizing there are some whom overcome.

Resilience Operationalized: Concepts and Processes

Derived from developmental psychopathology⁸ research, the inception of resilience research dates back nearly a half-century, and is most popularly associated with studies on maladjustments of children of schizophrenics. Later resilience research expanded to include study of at-risk children dealing with death of parents; impoverished Hawaiian families; substance abusing parents; and the effects of stress on competence (Anthony, 1974; Garmezy, 1974; Luthar, 2006; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Rutter, 1979; Werner, 1993). From these studies grew the concept of the invulnerability of individuals (specifically children) to adverse life situations; the designation of invulnerable was subsequently replaced with Resilient (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Rutter, 1979, 1985). Resilience is a difficult concept to fully operationalize given its varying definitions, and contentions over its existence as a trait or process (Jacelon, 1997; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 2007). Notwithstanding the incongruences there are frameworks, concepts, and models that overlap providing a range of ideas and approaches whereby to consider resilience.

Norman Garmezy is credited as being influential in the “conceptualization” of resilience, through his research on the development of schizophrenics and their children. He discovered that not all at-risk children become dysfunctional (Werner, 2012). Garmezy (1974, 1991) and

⁸ The defining features of developmental psychopathology concepts include attention to the understanding of causal processes, appreciation of the role of developmental mechanisms, and consideration of continuities and discontinuities between normality and psychopathology (Rutter, & Sproufe, 2000).

Garmezy and Rutter (1983) proposed resilience as: (a) encompassing both normal and abnormal development; (b) consisting of “methodologically rigorous” analysis of research data; (c) exclusivity of risk and protective factors; (d) inclusive of individual personality, family context, and social support systems – rejecting individual invulnerability; and finally, (e) considering both quantitative and qualitative research designs to understand individual experiences to help stressed children recover (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 2012). Garmezy’s fourth component of resilience produced the practice of categorizing protective factors as individual-level, social-level, and societal-level by various researchers (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2006; Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick & Sawyer, 2003; Werner, 1993).

Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) posited that adversity/disruption occurs allowing for the process of resilience to manifest and that the outcome of the process is recognized as the journey to adaptation and coping (p. 78). In support of that premise, Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) provided a useful inventory of five defining attributes of resilience via the amalgamation of essential elements that are most prevalent throughout the research, consisting of:

Rebounding/Reintegration, High Expectancy/Self-Determination, Positive Relationships/Social Support, Flexibility, Sense of Humor, and Self-Esteem/Self-Efficacy.

Rebounding/Reintegration describes the processes of responding to adversity and returning back to accustomed normalcy (p.76). This serves not only as an attribute but also as a desirable outcome of resilience. *High Expectancy/Self-Determination* is defined as an “internal” and/or “external” motivator or ambition not predicated by previous accomplishments but based upon a sense of worth (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Werner, 1993, p. 506). The strong self-efficacy and drive of Black male collegians identified earlier in this review by Hébert (2002) and others aligns neatly with the attribute *Self-Esteem/Self-Efficacy*, which relates directly to mastery and

successful accomplishment of a task and helps to frame an understanding of internal motivation. The men in Hébert's (2002) study were found to have significant belief in their abilities due to prior academic success, notwithstanding the rigor they faced to succeed.

The attributes *Flexibility* and *Sense of Humor* are interrelated as they both serve to help individuals cope via the adjustment of temperament to adversity and the ability to “make light of” hardship, respectively. Finally, *Positive Relationships/Social Support* is the existence of an adequate relationship that leads to resilience (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Rutter, 1985, p. 599). The Black male collegians discussed in section one are testament to the efficacy of this attribute. Many of them reflected upon the positive relationships with faculty, family, peers, and administrators as being critical to their academic attainment (Fries-Britt & Franklin, 2012; Harper, 2006a, 2009a, 2012a; Moore et al., 2003; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010). Earvolino-Ramirez' (2007) resilience framework categorizes fundamental attributes of the concept but does little to explain a process outside of its descriptive analysis.

Richardson (2002) offered a metaphysical description of resiliency process: “coping with stressors, adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that result in the identification, fortification and enrichment of protective factors” (p.308). Richardson's (2002) resiliency model (see Figure 1) recognizes a three-stage process beginning with an individual's emotional response to disruption, followed with an attempt to respond, and finally arriving at one of the following levels of resilience:

- Resilient Reintegration, which involves recovery from stressor(s) with an enhanced conscious reflective awareness of the process and protective factors that led to full recovery.
- Reintegration back to homeostasis, which entails electing to recover without acknowledging psychological growth or enlightenment derived from the disruptive episode.

- Recovering with loss, which results in a fragile return to normalcy, after being negatively impacted by the stressor, resulting in less confidence/motivation than pre-disruption.

Dysfunctional reintegration, which is an attempt to respond to disruption with destructive behavior, i.e., violence and/or substance abuse – individual was unable to rebound (Richardson, 2002, p.312).

Richardson's (2002) model indicates that there are levels of resilience an individual can arrive at after accessing and deploying various protective factors. At each level there is an assumption that a certain degree of introspection occurs that aids in building individuals resilience. A higher degree of self-examination (*resilient reintegration* and *reintegration back to homeostasis*) enhances an individual's self-efficacy and builds resilience through accomplishment (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007; Kumpfer, 2002).

The Resiliency model's assertion of a return to homeostasis provides a cyclical view of resilience that diverges from the common linear perspective. This stance denotes the existence of resilience skills development that can be learned; subsequently, development of K – 12 and/or postsecondary curriculum focused on teaching the process of resilience would prove beneficial to Black men (Jacelon, 1997).

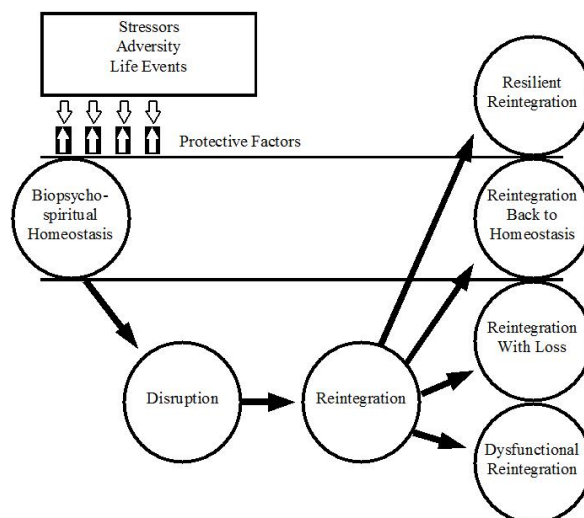


Figure 1. The Resiliency model (Richardson, 2002)

Morales and Trotman (2011) presents another cyclical model of resilience from an educational perspective, which describes the students' ability to:

Strategically and simultaneously coordinate resources in ways that helped them reach their academic goals. This coordination involved knowing when to utilize which resources, how to combine resources, and how/when to tap into the various aspects of the protective factors being implemented. (p. 18)

Based upon the aforementioned definition Morales and Trotman's (2011) Resilience Cycle, is a resilience process-focused model created to identify sequential actions that lead to students rebounding from adversity. Resilience Cycle emphasizes the process of resilience while maintaining a focus upon protective factors, provides a sound yet malleable framework with the ability to effectively examine heterogeneous populations and recognizes the transferability of applied and newly acquired protective factors and processes to different adverse situations.

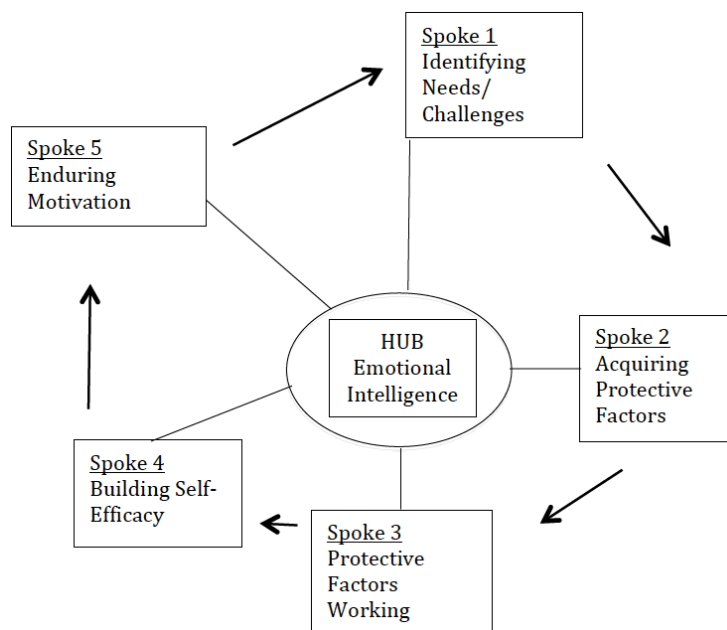


Figure 2. The resilience cycle (Morales & Trotman, 2011)

The Resilience Cycle consists of five *Spokes* surrounding an Emotional Intelligence Hub (see Figure 2). Spokes 1 – 3 are the recognition, manifestation, and coordination Stages of the process: during these stages, the student realistically recognizes her or his major risk factors (Spoke 1); manifests and/or seeks out protective factors that have the potential to offset or mitigate negative effects of the risk factors (Spoke 2); and then manages her or his protective factors in concert to propel her or himself toward high academic achievement (Spoke 3) (Morales & Trotman, 2011, p. 18 – 19). A proactive pragmatism that allows students to readily identify weaknesses, assess the environment, and select and deploy protection arises within these three critical Spokes. Applying Spokes 1 – 3 as a means of analyzing the 143 Black men in Harper’s (2009a) study illustrates that a strong understanding of negative majoritarian views of Black males is associated with Spoke 1; the decision to engage in “prove-them-wrong behavior in opposition to campus racism, coupled with the development of meaningful, supportive peer relationships aligns with Spokes 2 and 3.

Similar to Richardson’s (2002) higher levels of resilience – resilient reintegration and

reintegration back to homeostasis – Spokes 4 and 5 can be classified as the self-efficacy and introspection stages, as students recognize the effectiveness of the protective factors and continues to refine and implement them (Stage 4); and as an evolving vision of the desired destination sustains the student’s progress, (Spoke 5) (p. 19). Within these two stages lives the student’s metaphysical foresight of future success – a corollary to the development of newly enhanced self-efficacy resulting from successful navigation through Spokes 1 – 4. Resilience is thus a process that can be developed as a skill comparable to characteristics of Richardson’s (2002) resiliency levels.

Finally, the Hub (Emotional Intelligence) encompasses students’ Self-management abilities including skillful and effective management of emotions amid stressful times, adeptness in social environments, impulse control and effective decision-making under duress. While Spokes 1- 5 are concepts or stages of the Resilience Cycle that may be taught, Morales and Trotman (2011) propose that the Hub is grounded in Emotional Intelligence (EI), and as such, is determined by concepts including ability (intelligence) and traits (personality). The Hub is highlighted by Morales and Trotman (2011) as a skill set; therefore, when analyzing students via the Resiliency Cycle researchers must account for individual heterogeneity, circumstance, and emotional intelligence associated with the Hub. For example in a study by Joseph and Newman (2010), women scored higher on various EI ability and trait tests; therefore, it could be inferred that some women could potentially be more resilient than men, given that their EIs are more developed.

Resilience in Educational Context

Granted that resilience research hails from psychopathology many studies of this concept have focused on psychology and health related fields (Masten, Best, & Garmezy; 1990; Luthar,

2006; Rutter, 2006; Ungar, 2008). The academic resilience of historically underrepresented minorities in K–12 and postsecondary educational settings has been a focal point of study for many educational researchers (American Psychological Association Task Force on Resilience and Strength in Black Children and Adolescents, 2008; Brown, 2008; Cavazos et al., 2010; Castro, Garcia, Cavazos & Castro, 2011; Floyd, 1996; Ford, Kokjie & Lewis, 1996; Howell, 2004; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Morales, 2008, 2010; Morales & Trotman, 2004, 2011; Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1994; Wilson-Sadberry, Winfield, & Royster, 1991). The influence of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability/disability, language, all add variation to research that seeks to understand resilience. Coupled with particular settings and/or circumstance an individual is being investigated within makes the study of resilience within sub-groups even more vital and useful – markedly so in regard to Black men.

A study focused on understanding resilience in Black adolescents by the American Psychological Association Task force on resilience and strength in Black children and adolescents (2008) resolved that it is valuable for resilience studies to acknowledge the “cultural integrity” of Black teens as their experiences are unique to their position in society. Therefore, the review of empirical work in this section highlights literature focused on the resilience of underrepresented groups within multifarious, postsecondary educational settings. This intends to provide insight into the creative means of exploring resilience in underrepresented Black men and the implications of such research.

One example of the contextual resilience on minorities can be found in a quantitative exploratory study of 131 Black urban teenagers, conducted by Miller and MacIntosh (1999). This study examined the impact of “culturally unique” protective factors, such as racial socialization and racial identity, on the participants’ educational resilience. According to Miller

and MacIntosh (1999), Black parents attempt to edify their children on how to circumnavigate racialized milieus, while simultaneously instilling in them a sense of pride and confidence in their racial identity. Although Miller and MacIntosh (1999) did not focus on college students, their study did explore the impact of cultural aspects, such as ethnic pride, on resilience, finding that racial identity impacted academic resilience--as indicated by GPA--while racial socialization was not statistically significant. Like Miller and MacIntosh (1999), Brown (2008) sought to examine the impact of racial socialization messages and support systems on the academic resilience of 154 Black students at a Midwestern PWI. In Brown's (2008) quantitative study, however, academic resilience was positively associated with racial socialization, as well as various support systems. The students' extended families and adult members of their communities were reported to be the primary deliverers of racial socialization. In tandem, these studies demonstrate how racial context can be utilized to better understand the resilience of minority students.

Utilizing a 1982 dataset – from responses to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) High School and Beyond survey, comprised of 1,213 African American males, Wilson-Sadberry et al. (1991) sought to quantitatively examine various influences on the degree attainment of study participants. Specifically, the researchers examined how educational preparation, counselors, and family and peers impacted resilience. The researchers found that socioeconomic status, familial and peer influence, educational preparation, and postsecondary plans all positively influenced participant ability to attain a college education. They also discovered that educational plans, which are a factor of emotional intelligence (EQ), were a stronger predictor of resilience than socioeconomic status. An additionally strong predictor revealed in the course of the study was fatherly influence. Over 75% of the Black men attending

college linked the decision to obtain a degree to their fathers. These findings speak to the strength of family and individual-level protective factors in encouraging self-efficacy and, therefore, resilience in Black men (Olsson et al., 2003).

Ford et al. (1996) conducted a quantitative study that found individual-level protective factors linked to EQ to positively impact the academic resilience of Black college men. They examined if psychosocial variables such as emotional intelligence, bicultural behaviors, locus of control, and social support positively influenced the academic resilience of 104 Black college males raised in urban settings who were attending predominately (90%) urban institutions. Participants with a grade point average of 3.0 and above and a self-reported experience of high stress were deemed academically resilient, while those just as stressed with lower GPAs were not. Ultimately, Ford et al. (1996) found that 5.5% of the variance in academic resilience was explained by EQ, while none of the other variables were found to be statistically significant. Although the study has limitations, including institutional homogeneity and GPA as an indicator of resilience, the researchers provide valuable insight into academic resilience and EQ. Ford et al. (1996) posited that the educational struggles of Black men could be directly related to their rejection of mainstream American culture as a result of experiences with racism. However, students with high EQs were found to be better equipped to handle microaggressions and, therefore, reacted with a prove-them-wrong response as compared to the men in Moore et al. (2003), Reynolds (2010), and Harper (2009a) studies. The researchers call for similar studies focused on comparing Black males from PWIs with those at HBCUs, and program development with the objective of building EQ in younger students.

Cavazos et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study at a Hispanic serving institution (HSI). They interviewed 11 Latino college students with minimum GPAs of 2.0 in order to

understand the impact of five protective factors on their academic resilience. The factors being examined included: high educational goals, support and encouragement from parents, intrinsic motivation, internal locus of control, and high self-efficacy. Findings showed that the 11 participants reported possessing high levels of each protective factor; however, in regard to self-efficacy, many of the students characterized themselves as hard working rather than intelligent, which could be an indication of cultural nuance rather than non-belief in their intellectual abilities. The researchers found that although the participants reported high levels of protective factors many of the students reported not faring well in high school. In this regard, some HSIs are recognized for offering supportive campus ethos and focused student services, which perhaps explains the contradiction. The study would have benefited from insight into the affect of social environment-level protective factors, such as supportive teachers and administrators, on the participants resilience, in addition to an analysis on the interplay between factors.

Morales (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 50 high-achieving, low socioeconomic status Black and Latino students from private, public, and 2-year institutions of higher education and examined how participants utilized multiple protective factors in concert to facilitate resilience. Through interviews with participants who had completed a minimum of 30 college level credits and earned a GPA of 3.0 or better and whose parents' educational level was high school graduate or less, Morales (2010) identified two clusters of protective factors working in concert to provide resilience. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the participants reported interplay between protective factors in cluster 1, which consisted of the following protective factors: willingness/desire to class jump, caring school personnel, sense of obligation to ones race/ethnicity, and strong future orientation (p. 167). Cluster 2 consisted of six protective factors: strong work ethic, persistence, high self-esteem, internal locus of control, attendance at out of

zone school, high parental expectations supported by words and actions, and mother modeling strong work ethic. Seventy percent of the participants reported interaction between these factors (p. 169). An example of a student employing cluster 1 protective factors would be the willingness of a student to seek membership in a higher social class (willingness/desire to class jump) due to their desire to be a positive representative of their race (sense of obligation to ones race/ethnicity). Morales (2010) maintained that resilience research has a tendency of focusing narrowly on singular protective factors and their impact, failing to address how protective factors often work in tandem

Women continue to outpace men on college campuses and outnumber men in degree attainment; however, many of them also face challenges and adversity in postsecondary education, and as such are appropriate subjects for resilience study. Castro et al. (2011) and Howell (2004) conducted resilience studies with female doctoral students and adult women returning to college, respectively. Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, Castro et al.'s (2011) qualitative study sought to reveal how female Ph.D. candidates (four White and three Latina) perceive their academic resilience. The participants attributed individual-level protective factors to their academic resilience in doctoral study citing independence, internal locus of control, resolve, and perseverance as factors aiding in their success. While previous research identified social environmental-level factors that facilitated resilience, these women identified negative external motivators as protective factors consisting of lack of parental support, lack of a good father figure, and isolation from family. The women in this study identified that the negative motivation fueling their resilience originated directly from family. This phenomenon may seem inexplicable, however, given various cultural female gender roles

that exist it can be considered a risk factor for some women – thus this study introduced a new perspective to resilience research.

Much like Castro et al. (2011), Howell (2004) contended that academic success for women may be considered a threat to significant others and/or close relatives. Howell's (2004) mixed-methods study combined interviews and surveys to examine the resilience of 60 women ages 25 and over enrolled at a Western university to better understand the participants' perceptions of their academic resilience. The women in the study perceived themselves as resilient as indicated by their high scores on both the Resilience Scale (117 – 168 out of maximum score of 175) and the Adult Persistence in Learning Scale (mean score of 63 out of a total score of 100). Many of the women disclosed that they had fought through obstacles such as low paying jobs, emotional abuse by spouses, and the academic rigor of college, while attempting to balance family. The women excelled by applying individual-level protective factors such as: self-discipline, religious faith, and self-efficacy through accomplishments. One of the women in the study offered the following to other returning adult female students, "The tougher life is, the tougher you get" (p. 39). While another woman provided the researcher with a note that simply stated, "Thank you for letting me express this!" (p. 41).

Analytical Framework: Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The preceding section described a few unique studies that offered insight into how cultural aspects are infused into the research on college student resilience. The next section discusses CRT as an analytical lens for this study of Black male resilience. As indicated throughout the literature on both Black male success and minority student resilience, protective factors are being applied to socioeconomic barriers. CRT allows for the open examination of

marginalization and encourages participants to express themselves and share their stories of overcoming adversity.

Anzaldúa (1990, as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) argued that researchers examining underrepresented, marginalized groups of people should employ new theories to aid in the understanding of their experiences (p. 23). Existing literature on Black men has lacked creativity in expanding the breadth of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in the analysis of the lived experiences of the population. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black men who will be completing or have earned a baccalaureate degree at a HSI and understand and explain the process of resilience vis-à-vis their educational attainment. Specifically, how do these men identify risk factors and how do they select and deploy the applicable protective factors to counter or overcome? This study also seeks to understand how being Black and male impacts the process of resilience at a HSI, as well as how it is impacted by socioeconomic status.

As such, the proposed study will utilize CRT as the analytical framework so as to allow participants to articulate a counter-narrative challenging dominant ideology⁹ – explaining how the process of success was achieved within the context of the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination¹⁰; i.e., being Black, male and of low SES (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

Foundations of Critical Race Theory

Rooted in critical legal studies (CLS), which sought to admonish the oppressive, meritocratic ideals of the U.S. legal system, CRT is defined as a multi-disciplinary movement

⁹ A critical race theory challenges the traditional generalized claims that Black men do not succeed in college (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

¹⁰ Solórzano & Yosso (2002) contend that a critical race methodology in education acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression – the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality (p. 25.)

concerned with providing a means of examining and eradicating racism, power, and privilege within the United States legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT has since transcended its legal roots and is currently used to examine power structures in a myriad of American institutions including those in health care and education.

Established in the late 1970s by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, CRT ventured to accelerate incremental progress practices of the mired 1960s Civil Rights movement by declaring that racism is a fundamental everlasting ill of American society which must be acknowledged in order to establish equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The foundation of critical race theory is traced to CLS, which is less radical, and focuses exclusively on legal issues. CLS contends that the consequences of litigation, judicial, and legislative acts are often exceptionally political and serve the interest of the wealthy and powerful. However, CRT is thought of as a social movement consisting of an amalgamation of theories, social crusades, and philosophical ruminations (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that CRT draws its balance as a conceptual framework and means of analyzing race, power, and racism from the radical feminism, civil rights, and the Black and Brown Power movements. It has been linked to progressives and radical theorists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. Dubois, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), incorporating revisionist history, construction of social roles, and a consistent challenge to the oppression of marginalized people.

Critical Race Theory Tenets

Critical race theory rests on six core tenets to expose and analyze racial, social inequities that permeate throughout American society including education: permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence, challenge to liberalism, counter-narratives, and commitment to social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2003; Taylor, 1998). The first tenet, the permanence of racism, identifies racism in the United States as a persistent social reality that will remain permanent unless the historical legacy of racism is explicitly acknowledged and placed at the center of discourse (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008). Using this tenet, researchers examine the lived experiences of marginalized individuals who suffer the effects of legal and cultural racialization. The tenet permanence of racism surmises that the experiences of oppressed people, in spite of a residual of a social construct – race – are very real and significantly damaging and often assumed to be nonexistent by the majority. Although race and racism are at the forefront of analysis for CRT, the intersection of race and racism with historically oppressed statuses such as low socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality must also be considered and scrutinized (Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This theory proposes that it is limiting to examine race outside how it intersects with other facets of identity. Additionally, anti-essentialism assists in understanding individual experiences within a particular context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This is an essential attribute of this tenet in that the racialized experiences of Black men may differ significantly from racialized experiences of Black women (Howard, 2008). Hiraldo (2010) contended that when institutionalized racism in academe goes unaddressed diversification and inclusion initiatives could perhaps perpetuate

racialized norms. This essential tenet means that there are individuals – minorities – who clearly suffer due to racism. For racism to permeate, there must exist an established benefiting hierarchy that renders the practice static. Such social structure is explained through the next tenet, which correlates the value whiteness to those inherent in owning property.

The second tenet, Whiteness as property, is that if there are deficits associated with belonging to a marginalized and historically oppressed group, then the corollary of being White must be value. This tenet implies that the worth of Whiteness manifest as rights and privileges awarded to Whites; these rights were historically protected by law (Hiraldo, 2010; Howard, 2008). In her classic work, “Whiteness as Property,” Harris (1993) inferred that “holders” of Whiteness are afforded similar values, rights and functions as property. Whiteness can be thought of as being alienable much like property (rights of disposition) and can be enjoyed as either a “passive” characteristic or as a proactive application of power (right to use and enjoyment); Whiteness has as property a particular hierarchy which yields status (reputation and status property); finally, the courts have traditionally granted Whites the right to exclude much like property (absolute right to exclude). Critical race theory challenges the premise of Whiteness as property and the privileges that are associated with being White, which often come at the expense of people of color. The law has traditionally protected the hierarchy of being White in the United States. CRT seeks to expose and critique this imbalance of power.

The third tenet of CRT, interest convergence, recognizes that the advances in equity for people of color have come to fruition only because they have aligned with, and advanced the self-interests of Whites (Bell, 1979; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dudziak, 2000; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Bell (1979) argued vehemently that interest-convergence which leads to social policy or change that threatens white supremacy will be unequivocally rescinded.

One example Bell (1979) forwarded in regard to the concept of interest convergence is his challenge of the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* – in accord with Herbert Wechsler’s critique of the ruling – as being uneventful and unwarranted (p.520). Bell (1979) surmised that the *Brown* ruling aligned nicely with the US need to entice the support of Third World countries during the Cold War, the appeasement of African American WWII veterans returning to an unwelcoming nation, and lastly, the need to accelerate the industrializing of the South. Later, Dudziak (2000) supported Bell’s (1979) allegations by arguing that the plight of African Americans in the US had presidents and policymakers, “worried about the impact of race discrimination on U.S. prestige abroad” (Dudziak, 2000, p. 6). In all, interests convergence confirms the permanence of race and racism as there is little incentive for the eradication of racism as there are both material and psychic benefits for elitist and proletariat Whites, respectively. For example, Donner (2005) examined the exploitation of Black male football student-athletes whose recruitment and admission at Division I colleges was based predominantly on their athletic prowess. The author exclaimed that while the student-athletes saw athletics as a means to acquire an education or to becoming a professional athlete, the interests of coaches and institutional leaders may have been grounded in “bonuses for meeting academic incentives” and the revenue from ticket sales, media contracts, merchandising, and corporate sponsors (p. 48).

Challenge to liberalism, another tenet, contains within its agenda the task of exploiting interest convergence, dominance, power, and privilege hidden under the cloak of colorblindness, meritocracy, and neutrality. CRT proposes that although ideally just, the concepts of colorblindness, meritocracy, and neutrality are utopian, juxtaposed on the backdrop of discrimination in the US. Refusal to consider race within the discourse of policy or to consider

that the law is colorblind negates the experiences of people of color. Liberalism ignores the experiences of marginalized people as manifested in culturally insensitive curriculum design, various educational student development theories, and the idea of race neutral “objective” research (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race theorists critique the Civil Rights movement as being incremental and a corollary of colorblindness. By challenging liberalism critical race theory bring to the forefront the need for comprehensive reform targeting inequity in the United States.

The fifth tenet of CRT, counter-narratives, is that the “experiential knowledge of people of color” is vital in examining racial marginalization (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through counter-narratives marginalized people negate majoritarian and often racist stereotypes and offer their lived experiences as evidence; informing not only the majority, but also other minorities. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) suggested that counter storytelling allows for self-reflection as a means to expose the four tenets described previously. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) offered three levels of storytelling: personal stories, other people’s stories or narratives, and composite stories or narratives that all serve to explicate a subject’s experiences in relation to bias, racism, and stereotypes. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) cautioned, however, that storytelling be utilized as a tool to counter the normalized discourse that perpetuates racial stereotypes, as well as to create and frame the experiences of marginalized people.

Personal stories are autobiographical, consisting of an author’s prior experiences with marginalization in comparison to the subject matter being discussed or researched. Other people’s stories or narratives are third person narratives, and composite stories are narratives that elicit “various forms of data,” and have the ability to combine the styles of the two types of

storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Storytelling is a powerful tool to explicitly analyze individual experiences or combine research specific data to help explore a topic. In all, stories, personal accounts, and artistic expression have been utilized to share people's experiences, beliefs, and perspectives; a vital component to aid in the achievement of social justice through both civil and human rights.

Commitment to social justice is the last tenet of critical race theory and appropriately describes the ultimate goal of CRT, which is to eradicate injustice and uphold the rights of the oppressed (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race theorists reject incremental change often associated with the Civil Rights movement; rather it emphasizes its “activist dimension” “recognizing that multiple layers of oppression and discrimination are met with multiple forms of resistance” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Ultimately, the establishment of CRT as a movement suggests that social justice must be manifested in transformation of the policies, practices, and perceptions that sustain the status quo, and the “de-privileging” of majoritarian discourse (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Howard, 2008).

CRT in Higher Education

Critical race theory has been utilized to examine disparities in health care, mental health, politics, sociology, feminism, and student affairs theories (Bell, 1992; Brown, 2003; Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Patton, McEwen, Rendón & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Williams, 1991; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005). Nearly 20 years have passed since Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first established CRT as a powerful analytic and conceptual tool for understanding inequity in educational settings; spawning a host of education research examining the plight of marginalized students. Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) endorsement also helped to reinforce the

consideration of CRT as a research method and framework explaining inequities in higher education. The next section discusses the discourse relating to the application of CRT in educational settings with a particular focus on relevant postsecondary research.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) juxtaposed CRT in legal scholarship to racial inequity in K-12 education and posited three views, “Race continues to be a significant factor in the U.S.”; U.S. society is predicated upon property rights; and that the “intersection” of the two “creates an analytic tool for understanding social (and school) inequity” (p. 48). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) identified how the legacy of racism in the United States affected the psychosocial and economic development of Blacks and Latinos --and in turn their educational development (Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). The researchers contended that White flight and redlining perpetuated the lack of access to valued property and educational facilities for racial minority groups, which held static their educational underdevelopment. This contention brings into question the notion of meritocracy and liberalism in education. Their meta-proposition that “class and gender-based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all of the difference (or variance) in school experience and performance” is perhaps the most compelling aspect of their argument supporting CRT treatment (p. 51). For example, White middle-class students perform better academically than Black students who belong to the same social class. Therefore, accounting for the intersection of race, class, gender, and other forms of marginalized status is paramount to understanding educational disparities. Moreover, the voices of oppressed people within the educational setting must be heard as a means of establishing social justice and reform (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Many researchers have responded to Ladson-Billings and Tate’s (1995) proposal for CRT usage as a framework for exploring inequities in education based on race and class and as a

conduit to eradicate discrimination through its social justice paradigm. Scholars have creatively utilized CRT to investigate K–12 educational pedagogy, curriculum, practice, and policy; marginalized student educational experiences; the achievement gap between White and Black students; and general educational outcomes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Love, 2004; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Tate, 1997). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) examined the experiences of two Black, high achieving students at the affluent Wells Academy located in the southeastern US.

Prejudicial disciplinary practices, limitations placed on displays of ethnic pride, and interest convergence in relation to access to high-quality education in exchange for athletic ability were identified through a CRT analytical framework that was derived from the students' narratives. In a critique of liberalism, the authors cited Wells Academy's token commitment to diversity through the hiring of a single coordinator responsible for a myriad of diversity programming for the entire Wells faculty, staff, and student body.

While the site of DeCuir and Dixson's (2004) study was an affluent school, Howard (2008) conducted a year-long qualitative study of the experiences and perceptions regarding race and racism of 10 Black male middle and high school students in urban and suburban school districts. The young men in Howard's (2008) research offered counter-narratives to the negative perceptions of faculty regarding Black male students. These men also practiced the prove-them-wrong coping strategy; similar to the strategy used by participants in Moore et al.'s (2003) study. The use of counter storytelling provided an outlet for these young men to express their experiences with racism not offered by the school. The young men in Howard's (2008) study recognized the need to disprove racialized stereotypes at a young age. This illustrates how racial battleground fatigue starts early for young Black men, leading to the development of racial defense mechanisms.

Educational research utilizing CRT as a framework has also been conducted to examine the lived experiences of the parents of marginalized students, as demonstrated in Reynold's (2010) study of 16 parents of Black middle class male high school students. Counter to the literature on Black parent involvement in their children's education, this study sought to reveal how "power, race and racism" impacted Black parents (Reynolds, 2010, p. 149). The permanence of racism was evident as the participants reported racist attitudes emanating from school administrators and teachers, particularly teacher's low academic expectations for Black students as microaggression. Parents attempted to prove-them-wrong by offering an "intentional presentation of self¹¹" to school officials in a preemptive measure to counter preconceived, racialized notions (Reynolds, 2010, p. 154). Through narratives this study shed light on the unique experiences of the parents of Black middle and high school males. The participants in this study explained to their sons the need to apply various coping strategies to combat negative stereotypes, supporting the permanence of racism and commitment to social justice.

CRT scholars at the postsecondary education level have examined a broad array of issues including: curriculum design, financial aid policy, student experiences, access, athletic coaching, educational progress, transfer student process, and diversity versus inclusivity (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Donner, 2005; Harper, 2009a, 2012b; Hiraldo, 2010; Jain, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) examined the impact of racial microaggressions on a college campus climate, and how 34 Black students at public and private elite PWIs responded to incidents of subtle racism, such as being ignored by classmates and professors and exclusion from social/extracurricular activities based on race. Through narratives formed from multiple focus groups the participants disclosed how within the classroom setting

¹¹ Self-presentation theory discusses the act of an individual to influence the impression others may hold of them through the manipulation of setting, appearance and manner (Goffman, 1959 as cited in Reynolds, 2010, p. 154).

they were often ostracized by classmates and faculty who intimated low expectations, causing stereotype threats within many of the participants. In addition, participants provided stories of feeling “drained” from having to deal with the scrutiny associated with being Black (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 67). The experiences with racism spilled over into social spaces as well (Solórzano et al., 2000). The participants endeavored to create both academic and social counter-spaces where it was safe to share their stories and where their experiential knowledge was appreciated and accepted as truth; in addition to serving as an educational resource for new students.

Harper (2009a) utilized Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) composite stories technique to weigh the successful experiences of the participants in his study against the negative discourse within the literature on Black males (Harper, 2009a). These men understood microaggressions on their campuses and rejected them by excelling academically and socially on their respective campuses. Harper (2009a) noted that liberalism had been perpetrated through deficit-informed research that continuously upheld marginalization and silenced the experiential knowledge of people of color. A CRT analysis can be used as a means of representing the voices of all people, as well as emancipating the experiences, beliefs, and truths of marginalized individuals. Donner (2005) utilized a single tenet of CRT, interests convergence, to explain the experiences of Black male student-athletes at Division I institutions. Through an examination of legal cases associated with Division I intercollegiate athletics and Black male student athletes, his study revealed that contractual requirements of athletics often superseded academic expectations. While some Black men were academically underprepared for college level work, they were still admitted to their respective institutions based on their athletic ability (Donner, 2005). However, academic ineligibility to compete athletically was often met with a loss of scholarship and team

membership, leaving these Black men to finance their education and excluding them from many of the academic services allotted to student athletes. In all, the academic wellbeing of the Black men in Donner's (2005) study was only deemed important in relation to their athletic participation.

While CRT, during its inception, primarily examined the Black and White paradigm of discrimination, branches of CRT have been developed to expose racism aimed at other minorities in postsecondary education, including Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans in (Brayboy, 2005; Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Liu, 2009; Delgado, & Stefancic, 2001; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). Teranishi, et al. (2009) used CRT framework analyzing the stereotype of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) being the model minority who excel academically in higher education in the areas of college access and admissions, AAPI college student experiences, and AAPI leadership in higher education. The authors found that a CRT framework could highlight the true experiences of AAPI students who were routinely characterized as academically superior, wealthy, and psychosocially well adapted and, therefore, are often ignored by institutions when developing campus-based support programs (Teranishi et al., 2009, p. 65).

Similar to Teranishi et al. (2009), Buenavista, Jayakumar, and Misa-Escalante (2009) cited the limited treatment of Asian Americans, particularly Filipino students, in the higher education research literature as the model minority and further argued that CRT helps to loosen the voices of Asian Americans as they attempt to assert their heterogeneity. Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal (2001) identified, through a CRT framework, how the intersectionality of race, gender, phenotype, class, and immigration status impacted the transformational resistance of Chicano/a students during the UCLA student protest and hunger strikes in 1993 and the student

walkouts of 1968 over the lack of support for Chicano studies and deplorable educational curriculum in the eastern Los Angeles school systems. The CRT themes of social justice, counter stories, critique of liberalism, and permanence of racism are ubiquitous in the literature about transformational resistance, and helps to motivate demands for social justice and an end to oppression (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

While the use of CRT as a theoretical tool for analysis in higher education has begun to expand, very few studies have examined the experiences of Black male collegians. This dearth in the literature is significant given the postsecondary experiences of Black men. This study will address this dearth by examining the experiences of successful Black men and how they succeed despite marginalization.

Summary

This review utilizes Allen (1992) and Harper's (2012a) work to frame the discussion of the extant research that investigates various factors in Black male success focusing on PWIs and HBCUs and that offers a glimpse into HSIs. Contrary to the "deficit literature" on Black male collegians, African American men do succeed in college in spite of insurmountable challenges. They are resilient and successful at identifying and garnering assistance from protective factors such as their peers, mentors, and faculty for support and guidance. Thriving Black men utilize institutional, academic assistance and remediation programs to strengthen their academic capabilities. They seek out family members to provide resources and encouragement, and they tap into their spiritual base for inner-strength. Regardless of the racial microaggressions or the political conservatism of the campuses, Black men are resilient and find ways to become involved and engaged as student leaders. And finally, the literature reveals that Black men exert exhaustive psychic energy to succeed in postsecondary education through a combination of

coping strategies and self-efficacy. Few studies focusing on Black men have been conducted within HSIs despite the number of Black students enrolled on these campuses. There is an absence of institutional identity at HSIs, rendering these institutions and the students they serve as unknown. As more institutions acquire HSI status and the associated funding, it is imperative that the needs of Black men are addressed.

While growing attention has been focused on Black male success at HBCUs and PWIs, existing studies tended not to illuminate the specific factors and conditions that contributed to Black male collegians' academic achievement at minority serving institutions; particularly HSIs, leading to a dearth of literature on Black males. Harper (2012a) provides one of the few examples that sought to understand the process utilized by the individual, such as building social capital on campus.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the process of academic resilience and the success experiences of Black male collegians who are completing or recently earned an undergraduate degree at a HSI. This study expands upon the success-based empirical research reviewed in Chapter II and provides a counter-narrative to the discourse on Black male underachievement.

Research examining Black male postsecondary underachievement has approached the topic from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives attributing non-cognitive, structural, and cultural factors as causation (Burd, 2002; Carter, 2008; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Harper, 2012b; Nelson-Laird et al., 2007; Palmer et al., 2009; Perna, 2000). Countering the deficit-informed research is the highly qualitative empirical work that has examined the dynamics of Black male success. Seeking to understand the lived experiences of this population, these extant studies have explored resilience related protective factors that contributed to Black male academic achievement (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Fries-Britt et al., 2012; Harper, 2006a, 2009a, 2012c; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore et al., 2003; Museus, 2011; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Riggins et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010). The current study seeks to move the nebulous thematic discussion of risk-averting protective factors associated with resilience to a theoretically contextualized inquiry of the process of resilience experienced by Black male collegians. A qualitative research design is most appropriate for this study because qualitative research is concerned with providing rich descriptions of the processes and/or meanings of individuals' lived experiences (Bogdan &

Biklen, 2007; Hammersley, 1989; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Specifically, this study seeks to explore how Black male collegians identify perceived risk factors, select and deploy the applicable protective factors to counter or recover, and understand the process of becoming resilient to be influenced by race, gender, and socio-economic status. This study will be guided by the following four research questions:

1. What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at an HSI during their college years?
2. How do Black male students at an HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors?
3. What influence, if any, has race and gender had on the academic resilience of Black male students at an HSI?
4. How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?

This chapter first provides an outline of the processes and procedures of research design and methodological approach. Then I introduce the research site and participant selection, including the means used to protect human subjects. Next, the data collection and analysis procedures are presented. Last, the study's trustworthiness and limitations of the study are discussed, as well as my position as a key instrument of the research.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative research design was selected for this study, so as to provide rich descriptions of the process of resilience and the meaning of the phenomenon through the lived experiences (narratives) of Black male collegians (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Hammersley, 1989; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Qualitative research can provide a

multifaceted perspective of the experiences of Black men, so as to gather valuable data from the participants that transcends measurement of variables, and elicits a robust understanding of how, what, and why they “feel” (Patton, 2002). While quantitative studies are effective in providing deductively acquired numerical data, the rigidity of its processes often overlooks comprehensive data that could help to explain an outcome (Creswell, 2009). The inductive style of qualitative research offers a more flexible schema for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Selecting a research design is based largely on the subject or issue being researched; however, the philosophical stance of the researcher plays a role as well – ultimately developing a relationship and influencing other design features (Crotty, 1998).

Epistemological approach. Carter and Little, (2007, p. 1317) posited that a researcher’s epistemological stance validates knowledge and assumes the task of “modifying” the methodology and theoretical perspective to be employed. The methodology, in turn, dictates and then examines the method that constructs data and analyses, ultimately creating “knowledge” (p. 1317). Thus, this qualitative study of Black male postsecondary resilience and attainment is built upon a social constructionist worldview that integrates the theoretical lens of critical race theory, informing the study’s narrative strategy of inquiry and its method of data collection – the semi-structured interview.

A social constructionist paradigm was identified as the epistemological approach for this study of the resilience experiences of successful Black college men. Within a social constructionist paradigm it is understood that people seek to define their experiences within a particular context or viewpoint (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2009). Berger and Luckmann (1966) are credited with defining social construction as frequent individual interactions (often face to face) within a particular socialized system. This interaction helps to develop social realities, that is,

interpretations, meaning, and knowledge although varying interpretations of the same interactions may exist. Crotty (1998) added that constructivism defines that, “diverse understandings can be formed of the same phenomenon...interpretations of meaning can be useful, liberating, fulfilling and rewarding but there are no true or valid interpretations” (p. 48).

The social constructionist approach to understanding how Black college men experience the process of resilience is informed largely by the perspective of the participants--a perspective that is built upon their societal status, interactions, and cultural underpinnings. Crotty (1998) stressed that culture is highly influential over an individual’s thoughts and actions, and that meaning is often inherited. Moreover, how one derives meaning from a phenomenon is based on social interaction. Essentially, as a constructionist researcher it is vital that the knowledge participants communicate, acquired through their lived experiences, is rich and detailed so as to enhance meaning through an intermingling with the researcher’s world view.

Theoretical lens. Creswell (2009) indicated that qualitative research utilizes theory in several ways: (a) as a broad explanation for behavior and attitudes, (b) as a theoretical lens for the study of marginalized groups, (c) the end point after data collection, and (d) no explicit use of theory at all (pp. 61-64). This study utilizes CRT as a theoretical lens to challenge the dominant ideology that Black men do not succeed in college. In the early 1990s Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first applied CRT as a conceptual tool for understanding educational inequity including postsecondary education. Findings from the researchers’ review of the literature highlighted that successful Black male collegians persisted despite racialized, microaggressive, campus environments. In addition, while Black male collegians are not a homogenous group, existing research has revealed that many of them are impacted by their respective intersecting societal status, race, and gender. CRT endeavors to expose the racialized oppression of marginalized

people through incorporating revisionist history, examining the historical construction of social roles, and accessing the experiential knowledge of racial minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Six tenets serve as the footing for CRT: the permanence of racism (includes the intercentricity of race and racism), whiteness as property, interest convergence, challenge to liberalism, counter-narratives, and commitment to social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). Three of the six tenets: permanence of racism (intercentricity of race and racism), counter-narratives, and commitment to social justice assisted in framing this study.

Collectively, these three tenets assert that an examination of marginalization and/or empowerment must consider intersections with other facets of identity, such as gender, race, and social class. In addition, the socially constructed concepts of colorblindness, meritocracy, and neutrality are experienced differently by, and may not be applicable to, individuals with particular intersecting identities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). I utilized the CRT tenet intercentricity of race and racism to examine the marginalized experiences of Black men, and investigated how intersecting identities may or may not impact their academic resilience. Utilizing this tenet adds depth to the understanding of the meaning of, for instance, being Black, male, gay, low/high SES, and disabled college student. It accounts for the amalgamation of Black men's identity and departs from treating them as a monolithic group.

It is equally critical that research on marginalized populations provides outlets for their experiential knowledge. Through counter-narratives that negate majoritarian truth, lived

experiences are offered as evidence of a differing truth seeking to inform and provide fodder for reform. The literature on Black college men is replete with examples of Black male failure. These studies provided Black men opportunities to discuss marginalization, failure, blame, and departure. I apply the CRT tenet counter narratives to provide Black men an opportunity to refute those claims and discuss how, why, and when they achieved and attained on the postsecondary level. Through this tenet their voices are heard and through their experiential knowledge successful Black men are considered expert witnesses – describing how to succeed in college.

Critical race theory's tenet, commitment to social justice, seeks to eradicate injustice and uphold the rights of the oppressed (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As previously mentioned, some studies of Black men have found that they serve as emissaries (Harper, 2009a; Moore et al., 2003) and as peer educators (Harper, 2013) who teach success to other minority students. I explored whether the same was true of successful Black men at HSIs.

As a theoretical perspective CRT appropriately aligns with the constructionist epistemological approach, as it recognizes that meaning is a corollary of interaction within a cultural context that consists of varying truths (Creswell, 2009; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This study utilized critical race theory as the analytical framework to provide a conduit for participants to articulate a counter-narrative explaining how the process of success has been achieved within the context of the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination¹²; such as being Black, being male, and belonging to a

¹² Solórzano & Yosso (2002) contend that a critical race methodology in education also acknowledges the intercentricity of racialized oppression – the layers of subordination based on race, gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality (p.25.)

particular SES (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). This theoretical lens informed the narrative methodology that was used in this study.

Methodology. Though findings from anti-deficit informed literature explaining Black male attainment align thematically with resilience, these studies have relied heavily on identifying resilience factors as opposed to the process of resilience. This approach leaves a gap in the knowledge of how Black college men identify perceived risk factors, and how they select and deploy the applicable protective factors to counter or recover, and how race, gender, and socio-economic status impact the resilience process. The present study used narrative inquiry as a methodological strategy of investigation.

Narrative analysis. Drawing from the social science and humanities disciplines, a narrative methodology in qualitative research relies on stories conveyed by individuals to provide rich descriptions of their lived experiences. It is collaborative in nature, combining the experiential knowledge of both participant and researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1989). Specifically, narrative inquiry is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected (Czarniawska, 2004, as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 70). The approach is most useful as a tool to organize and understand episodic accounts of an individual's lived experiences in relation to a phenomenon. Polkinghorne (1995) affirmed narrative inquiry as,

The linguistic form uniquely suited for displaying human existence...storied narrative is the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts. (pp. 5-6)

Simply stated, narrative research is concerned with developing contextual "stories of experience"

that give meaning, and treating those storied accounts as data (Ellett, 2011; Lindsay, 2006).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1995, 2000) are credited with providing the foundation for narrative study over two decades ago through their narrative studies which focused on teacher education, interaction with students, curriculum development, and the basic reconstruction of day to day life experiences and the meaning of those experiences (p. 31). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that narrative researchers endeavor to think within a three-dimensional narrative space. To study individuals within this 3D space, researchers must accept that a participant's experience (episodic or consistent) is viewed as "temporal (past, present, and future)", "personal/existential," and "place" (pp. 318-320). Within a three-dimensional narrative space, *temporal* denotes that knowledge has a past, present, and future; within this continuity current knowledge is a growth of previous experiences that inform future understanding. The dimension of *personal/existential* holds that personal knowledge is an outgrowth of interaction between self (inclusive of cultural background) and the surrounding world (society) (p. 319). This particular dimension implies the contextual nature of one's experiential knowledge. Using the current study as example, participants' personal/existential experiences were viewed within the context of how their socioeconomic status, race, and gender informed their perspective. The last dimension, place considers one's environment, but more specifically, experience is impacted in part by spatial location and/or situation, that is, how the academic experiences of Black men are impacted as a result of their enrollment at a HSI. Ultimately, to think narratively the "person must be fully considered within context," stories of experience are therefore narrated within the boundaries of time, culture and society, and space (Lindsay, 2006, p. 34).

Narrative research is appropriate for this study as it focuses on providing an account of the individual lived experiences with the phenomenon of degree attainment of Black male

collegians (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2013; Ellett, 2011). Specifically, the study applies the Personal Experience Story (PES) narrative analysis approach, which involves developing a story around an episodic event in a participant's life (Bamberg, 2006; Creswell, 2013, p. 73; Hardin & Whiteside, 2009; Riessman, 1993). Also known as *small stories*, the goal of PES is to provide a deep story of a slice of an individual's lived experience, as opposed to an extensive examination of a person's entire life. Most similar to narrative analysis is the phenomenological methodology, however, it differs as phenomenology seeks to describe the commonality or reduce the experiences of a group of individuals based on their lived experiences of a phenomenon into a descriptive essence (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Ellett, 2011). Narrative researchers do not seek to discover theory like grounded theory, or examine large cultural communities, specific situations, organizations, or groups as in case studies. Narrative inquiry is a very intimate methodology that involves a collaborative effort and sharing between participants and the researcher.

Overall, narrative research methodology is particularly suited to illuminate individual self-perceptions. It aligns appropriately with the social constructionist view implicit in the current study regarding the existence of varying realities constructed through lived experiences and interactions, and it provides a conduit for co-construction of reality through researcher and participant partnership, and respects "individual values" (Creswell, 2013, p. 36; Crotty, 1998).

Research Design

The focus of this research is to understand how Black male collegians experience the process of resilience and the meaning of the phenomenon explained through personal stories of their lived experience. Narrative analysis methods are fluid in that there are no stringent standardized approaches; yet, there are suggestive courses of action that are often blended and

teased (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). Combinations of various techniques help the narrative researcher to collect, analyze, and share stories. Therefore, this study first utilized a demographic survey to capture two sets of participant information that shed additional light on their backgrounds, including: (a) siblings, place of birth, and marital status; and (b) insight into experiences with hardship pre- and during enrollment, such as academic struggle, health, loss of family members, and finance. Guided by the traditional methodology of narrative analysis research, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection, and personal document analysis was the secondary procedure along with demographic survey results to secure stories of resilience (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 1993, 2004).

Research Site and Participant Selection

The research site, Weaver State University¹³ is a mid-Atlantic, HSI public, 4-year comprehensive university, with a total enrollment of 8,493 as of the Fall 2012 semester. Undergraduates comprise 78% of the enrollment (6,587), while graduate students accounted for 22% (1,906). Approximately 75% of all students receive some form of financial aid. During the 2012-2013 academic year over 70% of the WSU undergraduate student population were minority. Approximately 35% of Weaver State University (WSU) undergraduates were Hispanic, 26% White, 20% Black, 10% other, followed by 8% Asian. In academic year 2011, the 6-year graduation rate for first time, full-time, Black male members of the 2005 cohort was 38%, compared with the 55%, 35%, and 28% rates of Asian, White, and Latino males, respectively. Moreover, 29% of the Black males from the 2005 cohort were currently enrolled at WSU, while only 17%, 16%, and 8% of Latino, Asian, and White males persisted.

Weaver State University was selected as a research site for several reasons. First, my

¹³ Weaver State University (WSU) is a pseudonym utilized to safeguard the university's anonymity.

familiarity with key faculty and staff members, coupled with my knowledge of campus programs with high Black male enrollment was useful in identifying participants. Second, this study was concerned with understanding the resilience experiences of Black males at an HSI; Weaver State is both a HSI and minority serving institution (MSI) that enrolls a significant number of Black students. What was most intriguing about this institution is that while Hispanic students comprised a large proportion of enrollees, there was no ethnic or racial majority (51% or more) of students at WSU. In addition, over 75% of the student population receives some form of financial aid, indicating that while students at WSU may belong to a broad spectrum of ethnicities and races, their socioeconomic statuses may be similar. This distinction provided an interesting context from which to examine Black male experiences. Lastly, Black men at WSU successfully graduate at rates similar to that of the general student population. The 38%, 6-year graduation rate of the 2005 Black cohort nearly mirrored the 39% graduation rate of the entire 2005 WSU cohort, and is higher in comparison to the 32% graduation rate for the total Black student population at public 4-year HSIs (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Furthermore, the last four cohorts of Black male collegians at WSU averaged a 30%, 6-year graduation rate. This is a unique aspect of the institution.

Participant Selection

Narrative inquiry calls for collecting the storied experiences of single cases to multiple participants. While single participant stories tend to be lengthier, the intent of this study was to access multiple personal experience stories of resilience that offer varying individual accounts and provide rich descriptions. Therefore, purposeful criterion-based sampling was used to select 23 Black males who persisted through to junior academic level, per WSU criteria credits (65), inclusive of recent graduates (no more than 5 years removed). Given the purpose of this research,

participant eligibility was based on multiple criteria to “inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156; Patton, 2002).

According to Morales and Trotman (2011), resilient students are the “statistical elite” those who defy insidious educational outcomes associated with their historically underprivileged socio-economic status, while too many of their counterparts have failed to matriculate through college, these men have excelled (p. 1). Therefore, this study is grounded in the recognition that academically successful Black males at WSU who meet the criteria are resilient. In addition, this study identified additional hardships the sample overcame.

Black males who met the following criteria were eligible to participate in this study: (a) those who were actively enrolled, academic major declared Juniors, Seniors, and recent graduates (maximum 5 years removed), (b) those who earned a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average over a minimum of 65 credits (minimum CGPA using a 4-point scale required by WSU to earn a baccalaureate degree), (c) those with no pending academic or disciplinary sanctions at time of selection, and (d) those who were non-athletes. Allen (1992) posited that researchers should seek to examine how individual backgrounds combine with institutional factors to determine student achievement. Therefore, this study selected participants based on socioeconomic status--low and mid/high--to better understand how intersecting identities, SES, race, and gender impact attainment. Evidence shows that nearly 70% of Black male collegians do not attain a college degree within 6 years (Harper, 2006b); therefore, the criteria selected to define eligibility identified resilient Black males who were on target for degree attainment. Accumulation of credit hours equivalent to junior class status represents the halfway mark in terms of 150% (6 years) to degree completion measure. Thus, at WSU 128 credits, successful completion of degree requirements, and a 2.0 GPA are requirements to obtaining a bachelors

degree. Black males satisfying the research criteria have theoretically--at minimum--completed the majority of their degree given the following: 128 credits required/65 credits completed = 51%.

Black male student-athletes have been found to be more academically underprepared than their non-athlete counterparts, though they graduate at higher rates (Messer, 2006; Purdy, Eitzen & Hufnagel, 1982). Although many receive financial support, most have performed poor academically, showing the highest dropout rate when compared with other student-athletes. Student-athletes' college experiences are far different from those of the non-athlete population. To start, Black male student-athletes are recruited by Division I athletic institutions, and many receive monetary support in the form of full or partial athletic scholarships--often times inclusive of room and board--specialized individual tutoring, and extended assignment and exam completion time. Student-athletes also receive in-kind assistance such as significant campus-wide support, and they often receive more accolades for their athletic prowess than racial and gendered degradation (Messer, 2006; Person & LeNoir, 1997; Purdy, Eitzen & Hufnagel, 1982). For these reasons they were excluded from this research, as the scope of their issues related to degree attainment are more complex than those of non-athlete students and, therefore, better suited to a study focusing solely on their unique experiences.

Working with the WSU Information Technology and Alumnus Affairs offices, an email listserv inclusive of all Black males meeting the study criteria was created. While direct recruitment of criterion selected participants' aids in ensuring quality, working with gatekeepers assists researchers with an additional recruiter that has a rapport with potential participants and usually belongs to a network of similar gatekeepers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Therefore, an email was forwarded to several key gatekeepers, including Black

Greek fraternities, residential living and learning communities, and a grant-funded support program, requesting that the recruitment message and contact information be added as a link to their respective social media, websites, bulletin boards, and listserv. Combined with criterion-based sampling, this method of snowballing aims to reach all qualified participants.

Students interested in participating in the study were instructed to contact me directly via email or phone. The identities of the recruited and selected men remained confidential throughout the research process. All potential participants received a WSU and Seton Hall University IRB approved consent form explaining the nature of the study and its benefits. It stated that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could retire from the study at any time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data Collection Procedures

To understand the persistence and process of academic resilience experienced by WSU Black male students, data was collected from three primary sources: demographic questionnaire; an in depth, open-ended, semi-structured interview with each participant, and financial aid and admissions documentation. The interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes in length whereby I developed comprehensive notes to help elicit rich, detailed storied accounts, and conducted reflexive journaling to monitor my subjectivity. I analyzed participants' admission applications inclusive of entrance essays and recommendations, along with student financial information via the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) in order to add depth to their stories and aid in my triangulation schema. I conducted a brief, informal demographic survey that solicited background information about additional obstacles that each student had overcome during their academic career that were not disclosed during the interview phase. Participants were asked to provide me with permission to access their academic records and student financial data, namely,

their admissions application files and Institutional Student Information Reports (ISIR), which provided socioeconomic background data and parent level of education.

The in-depth interview is the most widely utilized method of collecting data in qualitative research, particularly narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Creswell, 2009, 2013; Riessman, 1993). The in-depth interview takes the form of a face-to-face conversation during which the researcher works with the participant to elicit rich descriptive or explanatory data with the objective to make meaning. In depth interviews tend to be ideal for collecting topical information, and is often less time restrictive than observations; they are also valuable for “assessing subjugated knowledge” of marginalized populations (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 98; Sandelowski, 1991). This method also produces transcripts that can be analyzed for thematic or contextual meaning, helping researchers to arrive at a greater understanding of the phenomenon in question.

The semi-structured interview involves listing and or outlining a set of questions to be explored by the researcher in order to ensure that continuity of inquiry amongst participants is maintained (Patton, 2002). Within this approach the researcher guides the fluidity of the conversation, helping to focus the participant’s attention on a particular topic, probe a response, and/or drill down into a specific issue or set of areas based on response. Unlike the informal interview, semi-structured interviews help to maintain a systemic approach to inquiry over several participants, allowing for greater analytical comparison (Patton, 2002). This method allows for a conversation to take place during which both researcher and participant are free to explore the topic fully or expand the context of the conversation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

I conducted the semi-structured interview as the primary means of data collection for the current study’s PES narrative approach (Bamberg, 2006; Creswell, 2013, p. 73; Hardin &

Whiteside, 2009; Riessman, 1993).

Interview Guide

Qualified students who responded to the recruitment email were provided with a consent form requesting access to related documents and permission for digital audio recording the interview sessions, and a complete synopsis of the study via email. Once the consent form was received, the interview was scheduled. Participants were asked to complete and submit the demographic questionnaire prior to the scheduled interview. The interview guide is informed by the study's research questions and conceptual framework. It is comprised of four pronged, chronologically ordered sections that extract storied experiences of resilience and include:

1. Background. Demographic survey responses and admissions application review – Establishes background context (Decision to attend HSI, Family, Ethnicity, SES, Gendered Experiences, Educational, Hardship, Triumph).
2. Risk Recognition. What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at a HSI during their college years? Designed to extract stories of difficulties/threats to success (social, academic, familial, financial) faced while enrolled. And associated feelings (despair, urge to drop out, fear), in addition to the influence of intersecting identities on those experiences.
3. Response. How do Black male students at a HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors? Story illustrating the process of selecting and deploying the applicable protective factors to counter or recover. When did the student know to deploy protective factors, were there multiple responses? Influence of intersecting identities on those experiences.

4. Introspection. How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice? Stories of how the student continued to negotiate protective factors? Has he shared his process with others? Influence of intersecting identities on those experiences.

The research question, *What influence, if any, has race and gender had on the academic resilience of Black male students at a HSI?* will be addressed through its application as a probe within each section. At the end of each interview, participants will be asked to provide any information that may have been excluded.

Data Analysis

Through narrative inquiry this study sought to gain an understanding of Black male collegians academic resilience and success experiences. According to Creswell (2013), “data collected within a narrative analysis must be analyzed for the storied account, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies” (p.189). As such, this study is guided by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber’s (1998) narrative analytic approaches: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-form, and specifically categorical-content, also known as content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The Lieblich et al. (1998) categorical-content analysis method is a means of organizing, describing, classifying, and interpreting the narrative data collected via semi-structured interviews (Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The approach is often used in narrative studies that collect data through a directive interview, for example, via the personal experience stories and seeks to extract narrative text in order to identify underlying concepts and ultimately to develop descriptive meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lieblich et al., 1998).

The analysis began with a review of all digitally recorded interviews prior to verbatim

transcription using Dragon Dictate 3. This allows for becoming reacquainted with the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993). The transcripts served as the primary data source and journal notes, admissions application essays, recommendations, and the demographic survey results supplemented the transcripts. The next stage called for deep immersion into the data by first listening to the interviews with the goal of understanding the shared narrative, then repetitively reading the transcripts while simultaneously reviewing journal notes focusing on inflection and written gestures in order to add depth to the transcript. Finally, there occurred a reading to develop initial themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Lieblich et al. (1998) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005) agreed that categorical-content analysis allows for themes to be predetermined by theory. I developed three sets of a priori themes based on theoretical lenses of resilience and CRT as they related to the phenomenon under investigation.

The transcripts and journal notes were analyzed utilizing the Nvivo 10 qualitative research assisted software, which aided in maintaining the immense data and efficiently organizing codes for analysis (Bazeley, 2007; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Computer aided analysis yielded the initial coding that was sorted into soft themes for the development of a rough thematic map as a visual sorting aid (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I reworked the soft themes and sub-themes into candidate themes by revisiting the codes and themes, refining miscellaneous codes until concise distinctions could be drawn between themes/sub-themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993); that were defined and prepared for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The themes were utilized as chronologically ordered headings for the restorying of each narrative; explaining the individual resilience experiences of each participant, in addition to the

influence of race, gender, and/or social class and insight into the acquisition of a social justice stance via participation in a peer pedagogy (Creswell, 2013; Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Riessman, 1993). The goal of this study was to maintain the narrated account of each participant. Member checking was conducted throughout the process of data collection through analysis to ensure my retelling and interpretation of participants' story was accurate (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Trustworthiness

Polkinghorne (2007) asserted that “narrative researchers study stories they solicit from others: oral stories obtained through interviews and written stories through requests” (p. 471). With this in mind, coupled with the qualitative orientation of the study, it is critically important to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In narrative inquiry, the researcher is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the participant's storied experience; the investigator ensures that the interpretation is accurate and thus establishes credibility (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described credibility as the measure of exactness between the investigator's analysis and the account given by the participant. This study utilized member checking from point of data extraction through analysis and restorying as a means of maximizing credibility. Traditionally, analysis in narrative research has called for close communication between the researcher and participant around the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). I asked each participant to review their transcribed narratives and my interpretations of the data for exactness or accuracy of the meaning of their storied accounts. This not only established credibility, but also eliminated the perpetuation of the silencing of marginalized individuals voices – Black male collegians – in relation to this study.

In addition to member checking, I also conducted peer-debriefing consultations with experienced researchers prior to moving from various stages of data collection and analysis. While in-depth, semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection, other forms of data: admissions application essay and recommendation and demographic survey were used to aid in corroboration via the triangulation scheme of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

The narrative form of this study sought to provide thick, rich descriptions of Black male collegians resilience experiences at a HSI. In accord with Lincoln and Guba's (1986) interpretation of transferability, the deep description of the experiences of the Black men in this study will aid readers in understanding how the findings can be generalized to other settings, contexts, or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). This study included varied contexts, such as location, institutional setting and control, and socioeconomic status of participants. I endeavored to provide a "full description of all the contextual factors impinging on the inquiry" (Guba, 1981, as cited in Shenton, 2004, p. 70). This process however, was not guaranteed to mirror the needs of readers. Chapter II of this study presented the research findings regarding the resilience experiences of Black men at HBCUs and PWIs that inspired this investigator to examine the identical experiences of the same population at a HSI. As various gaps were identified, the studies provided a point of departure for the current research. It was my intention to provide a detailed analysis of the Black male experience within the proposed institutional context to inspire others to examine the resilience of Latino, Asian, and/or bi-racial men at other settings.

Dependability

The dependability of this study was ascertained via the triangulation schema--journaling, the interview protocol, admission application data, demographic questionnaire, and peer debriefing consultations--coupled with a detailed audit trail of the research process from data collection through analysis and restorying. Given the nuances of the design of the study, it was essential that revisions be included in detailed description. Processes associated with the research design of the study will be presented in depth following a protocol suggested by Shenton (2004) which includes: (a) describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level; (b) addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field; and (c) evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken (pp. 71 – 72).

These combined actions of developing an audit trail, triangulation, and thoroughly articulating the research design can assist researchers interested in duplicating the design of the study for varying populations and/or institutional context.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, the investigator is the primary research instrument; an imperfect instrument like all others, making it impossible to insure complete objectivity. Shenton (2004) posited that confirmability “is ensuring that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (p.72). In this research the aforementioned steps associated with credibility, transferability, and dependability all lend to its confirmability.

Within my role as the sole investigator lies the additional maintenance of confirmability. One strategy that addresses this concern is to openly acknowledge bias that had originated from my personal experiences (race, gender, SES, academic resilience) that may have impacted my

selection of theoretical frameworks, such as CRT and resilience theory. In addition, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985), I made a concerted effort to examine critiques of the research processes that contradicted the findings of this study. This process will be addressed in the limitations and researcher positionality sections.

Limitations

It is worth noting the limitations of this study. First, while enjoying my status as a Black male may afford me particular insider standing with Black male participants and access to key gatekeepers, it could have been a hindrance (Ganga & Scott, 2006). The Black males interviewed may have experienced the need to tailor their responses to what they believed I wanted to hear.

Second, being a Black man and an insider was undoubtedly beneficial in building rapport with Black male participants and providing a presumably safe space for their sharing experiences, I did not attempt to define their resilience experiences juxtaposed my own. Meanings were derived explicitly from their storied experiences, analyzed as such, and compared against my own. In addition, the purposeful criteria-based sampling used in the study posed some limitations. Findings from this study are not generalizable to all Black students at the research site or other HSIs. This study did not examine the resilience experiences of athletes, underclassmen, or students with grade point averages below 2.0. While some students did not meet the criteria to participate, they could have been just as resilient as those who qualified and offered valuable insight.

Finally, this study also did not include students who transferred out of the institution. While resilience is commonly associated with perseverance, students who recognize that their educational goals and academic success could be better cultivated at another institution were not part of this study.

Protection of Human Subjects

As per the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research (IRB) at Seton Hall University, this researcher completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research's Web-based training course, "Protecting Human Research Participants" on 05/06/2012. The data requested from the research volunteers was highly sensitive and treated as such. Prior to the interview, each participant was instructed to select a pseudonym or have one provided to protect his anonymity. All information, including: interview transcripts, digitally recorded interview sessions, admissions application, and demographic questionnaire were stripped of all personal identification and the pseudonym was applied. Names of staff, students, faculty, and titled locations were redacted from the transcripts. Data was stored on my password-protected external hard drive that was kept within a locked filing cabinet in my home. I was the sole individual with direct access to this data.

Researcher Positionality

Within my role as researcher, the instrument for this study, it was vital that I acknowledged my background, position, role, and possible influence on the data-collection and analysis and, most importantly, the participants (Creswell, 2009). I approached this research on Black male collegian resilience as a resilient Black male. My experiences growing up in the Barbour Gardens, low-income housing apartments located in the North End of Hartford, Connecticut influenced my constructionist worldview. Like many young Black men coming from low SES, single parent households, my experiences were influenced by the associated societal ills--high crime rates, drug infested neighborhoods--and low educational and economic attainment. However, like many of the same young men, my social mobility was positively impacted as a result of educational attainment. Thus, I chose to study Black male attainment,

particularly focusing on the population's resilience, in order to answer the question, *How did they do it?* Initially, this study grew out of a series of discussions with fraternity members, friends, and particularly my younger brother regarding their/our college success. We credited our mothers, loving teachers, coaches, and self-efficacy with our academic success; however, what was unknowingly revealed from the discourse was the notion of resilience, which led to my present position as a researcher.

Johnson-Bailey (2004) posited that, "it is generally set forth that the common bonds of gender and race provide a groundwork on which to construct trust and dialogue and that an empathy will be extended across racial lines" (p. 130). I embraced my insider status and understood that as a narrative researcher it provided me with the opportunity to nurture meaningful relationships with participants that yielded valuable, honest responses (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I also understood that I brought to this study a set of values, history, and biases; some positive in nature, others perhaps detrimental but all needing to be held in check.

I believe that Black men have been and continue to be the victims of the legacy of slavery. The marginalization of this population throughout the world, particularly in the United States, has been epic and I wholeheartedly assume that the lived experiences of all Black men are consistently racialized. At times, when I overhear a White faculty member discussing the failings of a Black male student, there are moments when I tend to assume the faculty member is at fault for the failure. However, I also understand that Black men are not a monolithic group and that while race and gender are highly influential; their intersectionality with socioeconomic status may yield distinctly different experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through constant reflexivity I checked my subjectivity against this notion of intersecting identities to mitigate

misinterpreting or influencing participants' storied experiences (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2002; Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

Summary

This chapter provided a road map of the research processes selected for this study. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the process of academic resilience and the success experiences of Black male collegians who were completing and who had recently earned an undergraduate college degree at a HSI. Anchored in a social constructionist paradigm, the qualitative research design selected complements the goals of the study of providing thick descriptions of the lived experiences of resilient Black males. While the proposed study utilizes CRT as the theoretical lens, narrative inquiry via personal experience stories was the methodological strategy that served as a conduit for the participants to share their experiential knowledge through a storied account.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

Consisting of three sections, Chapter 4 offers a demographic overview of the 23 Black male participants. The first section is a demographic analysis of the research data collected from participants' demographic questionnaires, admissions applications, and the financial aid Institutional Student Information Records (ISIR). Section two introduces each biographic sketch of the college men with regard to background information, academic experiences (prior to and during enrollment), and prior experience with overcoming hardship. Participants' provided titles for their respective bio sketches based upon the theme of their personal experience story. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Participants Demographic Analysis

The 23 Black male participants in this study included 10 currently enrolled upperclassmen (1 junior, 9 seniors) and 13 recent graduates (within the past 5 years) from Weaver State University (WSU), a 4-year, public, HSI located in the northeastern United States (see Table 3). As illustrated in Table 2, 69.6% of the participants (16 of 23) identified themselves as of African descent, followed by 26.1% Caribbean descent, and 4.3% bi-racial (Black and Puerto Rican). In terms of citizenship, all reported that they were U.S. citizens; approximately 83% were born in the United States, while 17.3% revealed being born in Haiti (8.7%), Jamaica (4.3%), or Kenya (4.3%). Table 2 shows that the participants' ages ranged from 21 through 44, with an average age of 29 years. The average age of upperclassmen was 27, and 31 for graduates. These men were primarily non-traditional college students. These figures are typical given the varying enrollment statuses of the participants and the non-traditional student body WSU serves.

The average age of a WSU freshman is 24. Only 13% reported being married and five (21.7%) of the men specified they were fathers (see Table 2). Although 13% of the men reported not being affiliated with a particular religion, each participant acknowledged God or having a strong spiritual base while discussing their academic resilience.

Table 2
Participant Demographic Background (n = 23)

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
Ethnicity		
African	16	69.6%
Caribbean	6	26.1%
Latino	1	4.3%
Age (Traditional)		
20 - 24	6	26.0%
Age (Non-traditional)		
25 - 29	9	39.1%
30 - 39	4	17.3%
40 or Older	4	17.3%
Marital status		
Married	3	13.0%
Single	20	87.0%
Place of birth		
Haiti	2	8.7%
Jamaica	1	4.3%
Kenya	1	4.3%
United States	19	82.6%
Father	5	21.7%
Religious affiliation		
Christian	18	78.3%

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
Islam	2	8.7%
No affiliation	3	13.0%

Table 3 provides a summary of participant academic data including first admission type, GPA, college attainment level, time to degree, stop-out status, and major. Eleven (47.8%) of the 23 men entered Weaver State as first-time, freshmen, while 12 (52.2%) were admitted as transfer students. They were enrolled in various academic programs; 34.7% of them majoring in Psychology (see Table 3). All study participants exceeded the minimum 2.0 GPA required to partake in this study and 65.2% performed above average academically (3.0 or greater) (see Table 3). It should be noted that the grade point averages for the graduates are reported as of date of degree, while the GPAs of the upperclassmen were as of fall 2013. Table 3 shows that the mean grade point average for research participants was 3.11, with the following distribution: 34.8% earned between a 2.50 and 3.0, 52.2% fell within the 2.01 and 3.5 ranges, and 13% were above a 3.5. The difference between the GPAs of the graduates and upperclassmen was less than a third of a point, 3.23 and 2.95, respectively.

The mean time to degree for participants in this study was 4.4 years. Study participants' time to degree ranged from 2 – 11 years, with 52.2% graduating within 4 to 5 years and 26.1% completing degree requirements in 2 years. These data however, required additional granular analysis. For instance, since 2010 over 50% of new students at Weaver State have been transfer students. In addition, 78 percent of the participants enrolled consecutively each semester upon admission, with only 5 of the men stopping out at some point in their academic careers.

Table 3
Participants' Academic Data

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
Admit Type		
Freshman	11	47.8%
Transfer	12	52.2%
Grade point average		
2.50 – 3.0	8	34.8%
3.01 – 3.5	12	52.2%
3.51 – 4.0	3	13.0%
Educational attainment		
Junior	1	4.3%
Senior	9	39.1%
Bachelor's degree	6	26.1%
Graduate school	5	21.7%
Masters degree's	2	8.7%
*Time to degree (Years)		
2 - 4	15	65.2%
5 - 11	8	34.7%
Stop out		
Yes	5	21.7%
No	18	78.3%
Academic major		
Business Administration	1	4.3%
Criminal Justice	2	8.7%
Economics	1	4.3%
English	3	13.0%
Finance	1	4.3%
Health Sciences	1	4.3%
History	1	4.3%

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
Media Arts	2	8.6%
Nursing	1	4.3%
Political Science	1	4.3%
Psychology	8	34.7%
Sociology	1	4.3%

*Anticipated for upperclassmen participants based on academic progress reports.

Participants' financial data as of their last enrollment date included: family income, dependency status, poverty threshold, financial aid award, and merit scholarship information (see Table 4). While 16 (69.5%) participants reported an independent status, over 95% of the participants revealed being employed either on or off campus during their academic careers (see Table 4). These data were not surprising given the non-traditional mean age of the participants, coupled with the fact that 19 of the 23 (82.6%) men had family income levels that were between \$0 – \$60,000; 39% of the men were at the poverty threshold level (see Table 4). Table 4 details the highest level of education achieved by the parents of the men. The highest level of education achieved by 16 (69.5%) of the participants' mothers was high school graduate or below. Nineteen (82.6%) of the men's fathers achieved at maximum a high school education (see Table 4). As shown in Table 8, Zach was the only participant whose father completed a baccalaureate, and master's degree. It should be noted that, due to a lack of a relationship, three men did not know the highest level of education achieved by their fathers.

The average cost of tuition at Weaver State University for academic years 2000 – 2013 was approximately \$7,000. Of the 23 research participants, nine (39.1%) received a merit-based scholarship upon their entry to WSU. The awards ranged from approximately \$700 to nearly \$21,000, with a mean award of \$4,287.38. However, two participants, Urban Brother, and

Bennet lost awards midway through their academic careers and therefore did not receive the full value of their respective scholarships. The average amount of loans amassed by participants was \$19,229.47, which is roughly the mean average debt of the WSU class of 2012 (\$19,320). As indicated in Table 4, the distribution of loans were relatively broad, with 65.2% of participants accumulating loans less than or equal to \$20,000 and nearly 35% receiving loans greater than \$20,000. Table 4 displays the distribution of awarded grants among the participants (of the 23 men awarded grants, 8 (34.8%) were awarded \$10,000 or less, 7 (30.4%) received between \$10,001 and \$20,000, 4 (17.4%) were at \$20,001 - \$30,000, and 4 (17.4%) received over \$30,000).

Table 4
Participants' Financial Data

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
Employed during enrollment		
Yes	22	95.7%
No	1	4.3%
Family income level		
≤ \$20,000	9	39.1%
\$21,001 - \$60,000	10	43.5%
\$61,001 - \$100,000	3	13.0%
\$100,001 - \$140,000	1	4.3%
**At Poverty Threshold		
Yes	9	39.1%
No	14	60.8%
Mother's highest level of education		
Less than high school	4	17.3%

Features	Frequency	Percent of Participants (%)
High school	12	52.1%
Postsecondary	6	26.1%
Graduate	1	4.3%
Father's highest level of education		
Less than high school	1	4.3%
High school	18	78.2%
Postsecondary	0	0.0%
Graduate	1	4.3%
Did not know	3	13.0%
Dependency Status		
Independent	16	69.5%
Dependent	8	34.7%
Loan amounts		
≤\$10,000	8	34.8%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	7	30.4%
\$20,001 - \$40,000	5	21.7%
>\$40,000	3	13.0%
Grant amounts		
≤\$10,000	8	34.8%
\$10,001 - \$20,000	7	30.4%
\$20,001 - \$30,000	4	17.4%
>\$30,000	4	17.4%
Scholarships amounts		
≤\$5,000	16	69.6%
\$5,001 - \$10,000	3	13.0%
\$10,001 - \$15,000	1	4.3%
>\$15,000	3	13.0%

** Source: Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division: Poverty. Last Revised: September 17, 2013. www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld

Table 5 shows that one research participant, Nasir, accumulated approximately \$87,000 in loans; a result of transferring to and from multiple institutions (in and out-of-state) during his collegiate career. Table 5 also shows that 6 of the 23 participants (James, Jerry, Joseph, Leo, Lonnie, and Omolayo) did not accumulate any debt from loans in the financing of their education (excluding Parent Plus Loans). The only participants not to accumulate any debt from loans and accept (qualify for) grants were Joseph, a senior, and Leo, a graduate. Coincidentally, these two men are brothers whose parents earned, on average, over \$80,000 during their enrollment and financed their education primarily through scholarships and family contributions.

Table 5
Participants by Family Income, Dependency Status, Poverty Threshold Status, Financial Aid Award, and Merit Scholarship

Participants	Family Income	Dependency Status	Poverty Threshold	Loans	Grants	Merit Scholarship
Bennet	\$5,998	Independent	Y	\$19,345	\$16,898	\$9,038
Billy	\$59,604	Independent	N	\$26,040	\$4,323	\$0
E.J.	\$36,823	Independent	N	\$16,909	\$32,404	\$15,676
Florence	\$76,438	Independent	N	\$10,396	\$0	\$0
James	\$20,216	Dependent	Y	\$0	\$31,789	\$0
Jerry	\$22,941	Independent	N	\$0	\$5,145	\$0
Joseph	\$86,313	Dependent	N	\$0	\$0	\$18,936
Kareem	\$16,616	Independent	N	\$27,633	\$14,163	\$0
Leo	\$81,841	Dependent	N	\$0	\$0	\$11,395

Participants	Family Income	Dependency Status	Poverty Threshold	Loans	Grants	Merit Scholarship
Lonnie	\$10,304	Independent	Y	\$0	\$22,179	\$0
Megaman	\$37,500	Dependent	N	\$54,136	\$27,407	\$0
Nasir	\$3,538	Independent	Y	\$87,458	\$18,489	\$0
Nick	\$6,795	Dependent	Y	\$1,089	\$28,226	\$0
Omolayo	\$28,882	Dependent	N	\$0	\$36,467	\$20,828
Sheak	\$0	Independent	Y	\$22,181	\$12,274	\$0
Smith	\$7,590	Independent	Y	\$5,009	\$17,147	\$0
Steve	\$134,073	Dependent	N	\$49,740	\$0	\$7,500
Terrell	\$22,544	Independent	N	\$16,171	\$16,996	\$0
Thomas	\$1,378	Independent	Y	\$15,860	\$5,550	\$5,000
Urban	\$0	Independent	Y	\$36,883	\$31,039	\$9,501
Veinte Uno	\$25,714	Independent	N	\$14,087	\$28,992	\$0
Woody	\$27,000	Independent	N	\$23,569	\$7,297	\$0
Zach	\$21,000	Independent	N	\$15,774	\$17,418	\$736

Table 6

Participants' Academic Characteristics by Educational Level, First Admit, GPA, Major, and Time to Degree

Participants	Educational Level	First Admit	GPA	Major	(a) Time to Degree
Bennet	Senior	Freshman	2.64	Criminal Justice	5b

Participants	Educational Level	First Admit	GPA	Major	(a) Time to Degree
Billy	Senior	Freshman	2.81	Psychology	4
E.J.	Grad School	Freshman	2.58	Criminal Justice	5
Florence	Bachelor's	Transfer	3.71	Nursing	2
James	Grad School	Transfer	3.46	Psychology	2
Jerry	Grad School	Transfer	3.20	Sociology	4
Joseph	Senior	Freshman	3.23	Political Science	4
Kareem	Senior	Transfer	3.09	Psychology	4
Leo	Grad School	Transfer	3.07	Psychology	2
Lonnie	Senior	Transfer	3.03	English	3
Megaman	Bachelor's	Freshman	3.10	Media Arts	8b
Nasir	Senior	Transfer	3.28	Psychology	5b
Nick	Junior	Freshman	3.22	Psychology	4
Omolayo	Bachelor's	Freshman	3.57	English	5
Sheak	Senior	Transfer	2.50	Economics	3
Smith	Senior	Transfer	2.93	Media Arts	2
Steve	Master's	Freshman	3.20	Business Administration	4
Terrell	Bachelor's	Freshman	3.04	Psychology	11b
Thomas	Bachelor's	Transfer	4.00	Health Science	2
Urban	Senior	Freshman	2.79	Finance	11b
Veinte Uno	Grad School	Freshman	2.83	English	5
Woody	Bachelor's	Transfer	2.94	Psychology	2
Zach	Masters	Transfer	3.23	History	4

(a)Time to degree anticipated for the upperclassmen participants based on degree progress. (b) Denotes stop-out

Table 7
Participants by Ethnicity, Place of Birth, Age, Marital Status, Number of Children, and Religion

Participants	Ethnicity	Place of Birth	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Religion
Bennet	African	USA	22	S	0	Christian
Billy	African	USA	44	M	2	Christian
E.J.	Haitian	USA	27	M	2	Christian
Florence	African	USA	44	S	0	N/A
James	Haitian	Haiti	24	S	0	Christian
Jerry	Haitian	Haiti	28	S	0	Christian
Joseph	African	USA	22	S	0	Christian
Kareem	African	USA	24	S	0	Christian
Leo	African	USA	27	S	0	Christian
Lonnie	African	USA	24	S	0	Christian
Megaman	Jamaican	USA	30	S	0	Christian
Nasir	African	USA	26	S	1	Islam
Nick	African	USA	21	S	0	Christian
Omolayo	African	USA	27	S	0	N/A
Sheak	African	USA	34	M	2	Islam
Smith	Jamaican	USA	26	S	0	Christian
Steve	African	USA	27	S	0	Christian
Terrell	African	USA	31	S	0	N/A
Thomas	African	USA	44	S	0	Christian
Urban	Puerto Rican	USA	31	S	0	Christian
Veinte	Jamaican	Jamaica	28	S	0	Christian
Woody	African	USA	40	S	2	Christian
Zach	African	Kenya	27	S	0	Christian

Table 8
Participants by Highest Level of Parental Education, and Number of Siblings

Participants	Mother's Education	Father's Education	Number of Siblings
Bennet	Less than high school	High school	1
Billy	High school	High school	2
E.J.	High school	High school	4
Florence	Less than high school	Less than high school	6
James	High school	High school	1
Jerry	High school	High school	3
Joseph	High school	High school	1
Kareem	Graduate	Unknown	2
Leo	High school	High school	1
Lonnie	High school	High school	5
Megaman	Associate degree	High school	4
Nasir	Bachelor's degree	High school	17
Nick	High school	High school	2
Omolayo	Associate degree	High school	4
Sheak	Bachelor's degree	High school	4
Smith	Less than high school	Unknown	1
Steve	Associate degree	High school	1
Terrell	Associate degree	High school	2
Thomas	High school	High school	1
Urban	High school	High school	4
Veinte	High school	Unknown	5
Woody	High school	High school	6
Zach	Less than high school	Graduate	4

Participants Profiles

Participant Profile 1: Bennet – The Windshield

At the time of the study Bennet was a 22-year-old senior majoring in Criminal Justice with a 2.64 GPA who grew up in the inner city of the second largest city in the state. His father was a drug dealer, who used Bennet, at times, to deliver drug money. Bennet's mother explained his father's periodic incarcerations as work-trips. Despite his tumultuous childhood, Bennet excelled in grammar and middle school and, as a result, he was admitted to one of the City's charter high schools. Bennet was enrolled in honors courses, and his love for learning and community activism intensified when he joined the school's journalism club. As an "investigative reporter" he published articles exposing the charter school's many ills. He would enter Weaver State as a freshman on a full, 4-year, academic scholarship in 2009. Bennet's struggles began after he lost the scholarship. He dropped out and returned to WSU the following semester after working with the Office of Financial Aid. Bennet described living life looking through the "windshield," as opposed to into the rearview mirror. He is ever focused on the future.

Participant Profile 2: Billy – Destiny

At the time of the study Billy was a 44-year-old senior with a 2.81 GPA majoring in Psychology. He is married with two children, and he was a bright student in high school. He was raised in a crime-infested neighborhood and fell victim to many of the social problems associated with places high in crime. He became affiliated with gangs as early on as grammar school, and launched into a 20-year life of drug dealing, violent crimes, life-threatening bouts with drug addiction, and incarceration. Now, it has been over 15 years since Billy emerged from his "abyss." He attributed his second chance to his wife, who encouraged him to develop a

relationship with Christ and to enter drug rehabilitation. Finally drug-free, Billy was admitted to WSU as a transfer student in 2010. He has since fully embraced his Christian faith and served as a counselor and minister. While at WSU, he struggled with his religious beliefs and the philosophical underpinnings of his academic major. During his interview Billy stated, “I’m stepping into my destiny.”

Participant Profile 3: E.J. – Mastermind

At the time of the study E.J. was a 27-year-old husband and father of two. He entered WSU in 2004 as a freshman with a \$15,000 external scholarship. He graduated in 2009 with a B.S. degree in Criminal Justice, and he earned a GPA of 2.58. Currently enrolled in graduate school at Weaver State, E.J. is of Haitian descent, born to immigrant parents. He is one of five children; the only to have earned a college degree. He was married by the age of 22 and had two children before completing his undergraduate degree in 2009. A gifted student, E.J. began to participate in college readiness programs serving low-income students at the age of 12, including the U.S. Department of Education Gear Up program. In high school he participated in multiple sports and joined many clubs and organizations. E.J.’s high level of engagement continued at Weaver State, where he gained membership in several organizations. E.J. struggled with writing his first year. He claimed to derive his approach to success from Dr. Napoleon Hill’s *Mastermind* concept in which individuals leverage networks of like-minded people in order to accomplish tasks.

Participant Profile 4: Florence – Hope

At the time of the study Florence was a 44-year-old Nursing major who transferred to WSU from Hampton University, an HBCU. He graduated Cum Laude (3.71 GPA) from Weaver State in 2013. The youngest of seven, Florence grew up in the suburbs of a small, predominantly

White, working-class township. A strong student in high school, he decided to attend an HBCU in hopes of becoming a doctor and gaining more insight into his African American heritage. Prior to enrolling in Hampton, Florence experienced the death of two of his older siblings due to substance abuse. As a result, at 18 years old, he was asked to serve as caretaker for his three nieces and nephews. He accepted the task and worked with his mother and other extended family members to fulfill the responsibilities associated with parenting. While at Hampton, Florence had to overcome his own substance abuse issues. At Weaver State, he grappled with the transition back into college. During his interview, the theme of hope continued to arise. Florence stated, “I’ve always wanted more for myself, believing that I deserve more, and seeking—setting out to get it.”

Participant Profile 5: James – Tunnel Vision

Born in Haiti, 24-year-old James immigrated to the United States with his parents when he was only 6. While he did not speak much and struggled socially with the cultural transition, he managed to perform well academically. Initially, college was not part of James’ future plans. His parents were devout Jehovah’s Witnesses and college was viewed as a means of “associating” with the world. This, coupled with a pedestrian high school guidance office, resulted in James’ lack of preparation for the college application process; however, he eventually enrolled in a community college. He transferred to WSU in 2009, and 3 years later earned a bachelor’s degree in Psychology with a 3.46 GPA. Upon enrolling at WSU, James struggled again with transitioning to a new environment. He decided to join campus-based clubs and organizations, and he even studied abroad in London, England. James recalled acquiring a love for learning while in college. He said this love instilled in him a type of “tunnel vision” with regard to academics; a strength of focus that aided in his success at Weaver State.

Participant Profile 6: Jerry – Something Better

Twenty-eight-year-old Jerry transferred to WSU in 2007 and graduated with a sociology degree in 2011, earning a GPA of 3.20. He was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and entered the United States with political asylum at the age of 7, along with his stepmother and three half siblings. His father would join the family in the US 10 years later. Jerry recalled struggling with the English language and developing low self-esteem as a result, which impacted his grades throughout secondary school. After struggling through school, Jerry was admitted to an expensive private college but later transferred to a 2-year proprietary where he earned an associate degree. Jerry joined the military prior to enrolling at WSU and was deployed to Iraq for 2 years during his time in school. Upon returning, Jerry encountered difficulties in transitioning to civilian life, but was constantly motivated by a need to make “something better” of his life.

Participant Profile 7: Joseph – Strategist

Joseph was a 22-year-old senior majoring in Political Science at the time of the study, and he had received a Gear Up scholarship worth over \$18,000 to attend Weaver State in 2009. He has since earned a grade point average of 3.23 and is scheduled to graduate in December 2013. Growing up in the city in a middle-class household, Joseph was a strong student throughout high school but struggled during his initial semester in college. He recovered academically, but had to overcome the guilt he felt as his family endeavored to finance his education. He talked at length about being furious at having to relinquish money earned through work-study and part-time jobs to his mother. Joseph decided early on that his strategy would be to earn his degree as quickly as possible. Therefore, Joseph enrolled in 18 credits (6 classes) per semester, earning no lower than a 3.2 GPA.

Participant Profile 8: Kareem – Mr. Overachiever

At the time of the study Kareem was a 24-year-old senior majoring in Psychology and Early Childhood Education with a 3.09 GPA. He was admitted to WSU as a transfer student in 2010 and is poised to complete his degree requirements in 2014. Kareem was raised by his mother in a single parent household and spent most of his youth in a city notorious for gangs, drug activity, and violent crimes. Kareem credited his mother, a master's degree recipient, with keeping him off the streets and involved in enrichment programs, including TRIO, College Bound, and Gear Up. Prior to enrolling at Weaver State, Kareem had short academic stints at three institutions: a 4-year HBCU, a 2-year county college, and a 4-year state university. He described these short stays as times he was trying to find himself and fill the void left by his father, whom he had never met. After finding his passion, teaching, Kareem has never looked back and seemed to pride himself on being a self-identified overachiever who will never stop striving for success.

Participant Profile 9: Leo – Confident

Leo, 27, is Joseph's older brother. He graduated from Weaver State in 2009 with a BA in Psychology. Leo entered the University in 2007 with an associate degree and approximately \$11,000 in scholarships. He excelled in athletics and academics in high school, but decided to forgo sports in college and focus primarily on academics. His diligence was rewarded as he graduated with a 3.07 GPA and was immediately admitted to the WSU graduate program in counseling. Prior to earning his BA, Leo struggled with confidence. In particular, his verbal communication skills adversely impacted his ability to participate in class discussions. Leo credits his parents, chiefly his father, with helping him to develop into a confident man.

Participant Profile 10: Lonnie – Observations

A 24-year-old senior who was majoring in English at the time of the study, Lonnie was born in the United States to immigrant parents from Liberia. An average student in high school, Lonnie first attended a private college, then transferred to a county college. He finally entered WSU in 2011. While attending the private college, Lonnie joined a historically Black Greek-lettered organization, in which he claimed to have learned the value of being engaged on campus and of active leadership. However, Lonnie's co-curricular pursuits, work, and academics strained his ability to manage his time appropriately. These issues, coupled with the long daily commute to and from WSU--which included two buses and a train--pushed Lonnie to a point where he became unable to cope with the complex demands of his daily life. He solved the problem by connecting with mentors for guidance and by observing and modeling those who successfully balanced the rigors of college life.

Participant Profile 11: Megaman – Constant Change

At the time of the study Megaman was a 30-year-old Caribbean man who entered WSU in 2004 and graduated 8 years later with a BA in Media Arts. Born into a middle-class family, Megaman was a gifted student who excelled in computer programming and music. Prior to attending WSU, Megaman spent 2 years at an HBCU. During his stay at the college, Megaman's parents divorced, and this caused him to withdraw with an outstanding bill and a hold on his academic transcript. Unable to pay the tuition balance, but set on earning a degree, Megaman abandoned 2 years of academic work and entered WSU as a freshman. Two years into his WSU career, Megaman secured a sales position at a local mobile phone company. The position was short-lived, because Megaman became involved in a cell phone theft ring and was arrested and sentenced to 1 year of probation and fines. He was devastated and had exhausted his savings on

legal fees. He slowly worked his way back to school and he said that he has learned from the constant changes in his life.

Participant Profile 12: Nasir – Family Over Everything (FOE)

Nasir was a 26-year-old father and a senior majoring in Psychology at WSU with an earned GPA of 3.28 at the time of the study. Nasir and his family lived in North Carolina, where they survived on his mother's \$11 per hour job and his father's disability benefits. Nasir was an athlete and managed to work hard in high school; gaining admission to a private state college. However, he only completed two subpar semesters prior to dropping out for 2 years to enter the workforce. Nasir painfully disclosed that he supplemented the funds he earned at his job at the local pancake house with illegal drug money in order to support himself and his family. Finally, acknowledging how his illegal activities clashed with his close-knit family values, Nasir decided to discontinue dealing, but not before being robbed at gunpoint. Convinced he needed a new beginning, Nasir decided to leave the South and transferred to Weaver State in 2009. While at WSU, Nasir conceived a child while visiting his ex-girlfriend in North Carolina. He faced the difficult decision of completing his education at WSU or returning to North Carolina to work.

Participant Profile 13: Nick Braine – Relentless

The lone junior of the 23 research participants, Nick, was a 21-year-old Psychology major with a GPA of 3.22 at the time of the study. He grew up in the inner city and recalled how some in his neighborhood viewed education as a weakness. Nick was a talented athlete in high school, but underperformed academically. In his junior and senior years he managed to refocus and entered WSU in 2011 through an opportunity program designed to assist low-income, motivated students. He has since financed his education primarily through grants, taking the minimum necessary funding to continue. During his initial semester, Nick struggled with what

he termed the “guilt” of being successful. He reported that he felt he had turned his back on those closest to him from his old neighborhood. He flirted with the idea of leaving school and returning to the “easier” and more lucrative street life. Nick decided that he belonged in college and became relentlessly focused on succeeding academically and earning his degree. He eventually ended up leaving his mother’s apartment and moved in with his grandmother in order to focus on his studies.

Participant Profile 14: Omolayo – One Man Army

Twenty-seven year old Omolayo enrolled at WSU as a freshman in 2004 and graduated in 2009 with a 3.57 GPA and a BA in Journalism. His mother had earned an associate degree and often emphasized the importance of education. Omolayo was a gifted student from a single parent household and attended private schools as a child. He participated in numerous college-prep activities prior to enrolling at WSU, including the College Bound program. Omolayo recalled experiencing microaggression as a student attending a private middle school, where he was one of only a handful of minorities. Resulting from those experiences, he formed what he called a “one man army mentality,” always staying on the defensive when he was at school. Although Omolayo struggled with finding himself at WSU, he persevered. He would amass approximately \$21,000 in academic scholarships from three different sources, ultimately financing his entire education without incurring debt.

Participant Profile 15: Sheak – The Folder

At the time of the study 34-year-old Sheak was a married father of 2 children majoring in Economics. Currently a senior with a 2.5 GPA, he entered Weaver State in 2011 as a transfer student with an associate degree in Business Technology. Sheak, who is the youngest of four children, grew up in a single-parent household with his mother, who had earned a Master’s

degree at Weaver State years prior. Sheak admitted to a “hatred” of school and talked about being a special education student throughout grammar and high school. He remembered seeing his case file folder on the desk during a parent-teacher conference. While his mother and the teacher discussed his needs, Sheak peeked into the folder and saw the label “mental retardation.” He shared that reading that label drove him to “prove them wrong.” Sheak struggled financially while in college. He disclosed being close to homeless, living in single rooms at a time, and at times being unable to see his children. His faith in Islam and his loving wife helped him to persist.

Participant Profile 16: Smith – Paper Work

Smith was a 26-year-old Caribbean man majoring in Media Arts with a 2.93 GPA. Smith, a senior at the time of the study, transferred to Weaver State from a selective private institution in 2012. Growing up in the inner city, he was held back in grammar school twice, but graduated high school in the top 10% of his class. As a result of his high grades, Smith’s high school guidance counselor suggested he apply to the private university, and he followed her advice and enrolled. However, he was ultimately blocked from continued attendance due to an overdue balance caused by a financial aid discrepancy his sophomore year. Smith tried to align his major transfer credits to the corresponding academic program at WSU. He stayed focused on what he called “earning his paperwork” and worked closely with his academic advisor to get on the path to degree completion.

Participant Profile 17: Steve – Pressure Proof

At the time of the study 27-year-old Steve was currently enrolled in an MBA program at Weaver State University. Steve began his studies at WSU as a freshman in 2004 and graduated in 2008 with a Business Administration degree and a 3.2 GPA. He grew up in a middle class

two-parent household and attended public schools, where he was an exceptional athlete but an average performer academically. Steve recalled complications with standardized testing-- primarily the WSU placement test. Based on his scores, he was enrolled in remedial courses and told by advisors that it would take him over 5 years to graduate. Steve seemed to pride himself on being “pressure-proof” and accepted the challenge. He completed the remedial program and excelled in academics; making the Dean’s list his first semester in college.

Participant Profile 18: Terrell – Determined

Thirty-one-year-old Terrell grew up in a suburban middle-class household. An average student, his childhood was filled with challenges. Terrell did not meet his father until he was 13, and he struggled to comprehend his mother’s bisexual relationships. Upon enrolling at WSU as a freshman in 2000, Terrell tested as being deficient in three skills on the placement test and only remained enrolled for 2 years. He earned a 2.1 GPA prior to dropping out. Terrell worked for 3 years before he entered the Navy in 2005. He reenrolled at WSU in 2009, this time determined to earn his degree. Going forward, his cumulative GPA did not fall below 3.1. He made the Dean’s list twice before graduating in 2012 with a BA in Psychology. Terrell experienced transition issues when he returned to WSU as an adult learner who had toured the world through his military service. He agreed that Weaver State was ethnically diverse, but argued that the students were socioeconomically “all the same” and added little to his college experience.

Participant Profile 19: Thomas – Balancing Act

Forty-four-year-old Thomas entered Weaver State University as a transfer student with an associate degree in 2011. He graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2013 with a BS in Health Sciences and a 4.0 GPA. Thomas grew up in a low-income household, but remained an excellent student in high school despite losing his mother to breast cancer. During his interview, Thomas

disclosed that he was a gay man who had been living with HIV since the age of 18. Unlike most WSU students, who must balance their academic, social, and work lives, Thomas also had to factor in health. He cited this factor as being a critical threat to his academic success while at Weaver State. He recalled a discussion of HIV/AIDS during a community health course, stating that the others students' misconceptions regarding the virus and syndrome were "astonishing." Thomas said that he "regrets" not speaking out on what it is truly like to live a full life while HIV positive, and missing the opportunity to educate his classmates.

Participant Profile 20: Urban Brother – 7-Year-Old Man

Thirty-one-year-old Urban entered WSU as a freshman in 2003. At the time of the study he was a senior majoring in Finance with a 2.79 GPA, Urban was an exceptional student growing up in the inner city and graduated high school as the class salutatorian, earning an academic scholarship to WSU. Growing up, he lived in an interracial, two-parent (Black father and Latina mother), middle class household. In the late 1980s, Urban's father joined the military and was stationed in Germany for 4 years. During this time, Urban was sent to live with his grandmother and attended grammar school in rural Tennessee. He recalled being treated like a "7-year-old man," having to light a kerosene stove for heat and cook pork and beans while his grandparents worked. At WSU, he began to work full and part-time jobs to support himself and to pay tuition. Urban's grades often suffered due to conflicts with his work schedule, and he eventually lost his scholarship. Throughout, he endured by remembering his experiences from nearly 25 years earlier, and he was poised to graduate December 2013.

Participant Profile 21: Veinte Uno – Purpose

Born in Jamaica, 28-year-old Veinte immigrated to the United States with his parents and two siblings in 1992. His physically abusive father left the family 2 years later and, as a result,

Veinte's family had a period of homelessness before becoming somewhat financially stable. Veinte was a good student and a talented athlete growing up, and he received several offers to play Division I football, but a devastating injury his senior year in high school eliminated those opportunities. As a result, he decided to attend college close to home. Veinte entered WSU in 2003 as a freshman and graduated in 2008 with a degree in English and a 2.83 GPA. In college, Veinte suffered from an array of medical conditions including anemia and narcolepsy, which impacted his academic focus, social interaction, and overall confidence. Veinte sought medical treatment for his ailments and quickly began a regimen of medication that was an immediate success. Veinte went on to become President of the Caribbean Student Association and later Student Government Vice President for Activities. At the time of the study he was enrolled in the MA in Counseling program at WSU.

Participant Profile 22: Woody – Getting My Life Back

A father of two, 40-year-old Woody transferred to Weaver State in 2006 with the intention to major in Psychology. Woody grew up in a two-parent middle class household and attended a private high school. Although he was enrolled in a college preparatory school, Woody never planned to attend college. Instead, his goal was to work full-time and earn enough money to afford an apartment and a decent lifestyle. After high school and a short one-semester stint in college, Woody found a job with the U.S. Postal Service and began participating in a scam involving credit cards and forged checks. He was arrested and sentenced to 10 months in federal prison. Upon his release, Woody reported that he exclaimed, "I want my life back!" Refocusing his energy, Woody started working at nonprofit organizations while attending community college. He struggled to finance his education while at WSU as his federal charge disqualified him from many work-study positions. He ended up financing his education largely through

grants, loans, and low-paying jobs, and graduated in 2008 with a 2.94 GPA and a BA in Psychology.

Participant Profile 23: Zach – Scoring Goals

Twenty-seven year-old Zach transferred to Weaver State in 2005 after completing just one subpar semester at another state university. A member of the Kisii tribe, Zach was born and raised in Kenya, and immigrated to the US when he was 10 years old. His father studied in the US on a foreign student visa, earning a bachelors and master's degree prior to the arrival of his son and wife. In the US, Zach grew up in a middle-class, two-parent, traditional Kenyan home. His father was a successful schoolteacher who emphasized the importance of education. However, during his educational career, Zach struggled with integrating socially. While at Weaver State, he joined a minority, male mentoring program that provided academic support and career development services, and connected him with like-minded men. Zach excelled at Weaver State and graduated in 2009 with a 3.23 GPA and a BA in History/Education. He has since completed an MA in education and was a stellar middle school social studies teacher at the time of this study. He reported that he was to begin doctoral study in the fall 2015 semester.

Summary

Chapter 4 introduced 23 successful Black male collegians. The descriptive statistical data presented in this chapter illustrates variances in their educational accomplishments pre- and post-college. This includes varying academic majors, grade point averages, times to degree, merit-based scholarship awards, and campus engagement levels. In addition, their point of entry into the research site also varied from transfer to first-time freshman. The data showed that many of the research participants experienced life-long socioeconomic hardship, while others had enjoyed and benefited from stable middle class upbringings. Some had even overcome early, life-

threatening risk.

The men in this study were from a myriad of demographic backgrounds and experiences. They were not a monolithic group. They were fathers, scholars, war veterans, and unfortunately ex-convicts. They immigrated to the United States to find better lives. They were HIV positive, gay, heterosexual, and suffered from incurable medical conditions. The participants in this study were nontraditional, relative to the classic description of an American collegian. Notwithstanding their race and gender, two factors were consistent among this group of men. Be it internally manifested or externally imposed, they all had experienced challenges to their academic attainment, and they all persisted. These men are resilient. The internal and external stressors that threatened the attainment of these men, in addition to their responses, will be further explored in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand and explain how Black male upperclassmen and recent college graduates experience the process of academic resilience in the context of their educational attainment at a HSI. Specifically, I sought to understand how Black men at a HSI identified perceived risk factors; selected and utilized applicable protective factors to counter or recover from threats; and how (if at all) this resilience process was influenced by race, gender, and/or social class. I also searched for evidence that the application of peer pedagogy (Harper, 2013) was a means of helping traditionally marginalized students successfully navigate the HSI campus.

Black male students' paths to completing college are multifaceted and complicated, and have barriers to their achievement. However, Black men who persist in college can respond effectively to the myriad of academic, social, financial, and health related challenges. This chapter presents the narratives of 23 Black men's collegiate experiences that were extracted from interviews that included rich episodic accounts of their trials and triumphs. Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, as well as review of admission and financial aid data, I first discuss the salient threats to college completion encountered by this group of students and their initial feelings of despondency. Next, I examine how these men selected (often blending) and deployed individual, family, and/or social environmental-level protective factors to neutralize risks (Olsson et al., 2003). This analysis of threat and responses provides the importance of the role of the Hispanic Serving Institution in promoting participants' academic achievement and attainment. Three tenets of CRT are used in the third section to present exploration of the

narratives of these men: (a) how various intersecting facets of identity shape their resilient experiences; (b) if their individual academic success encouraged them to employ a peer pedagogy; and (c) through counter-narratives, how do they explain their academic success in the context of their unsuccessful counterparts. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Internal and External Threats to College Completion

Black male educational underachievement is a complex issue that includes: adverse sense of belonging; mental and physical health issues; poor academic and social integration; lack of financial resources; and nihilism (Cuyjet, 1997; Ellis, 2002; Frierson, Pearson & Wyche, 2009; Harper, 2009a; Kitzrow, 2003; Strayhorn, 2008b, 2013a). The threats to academic success identified by the participants in this study are organized into internal and external risk factors. Internal risk factors refer to cognitive skills and abilities that accompany students to college and are those physical and psychological issues developed prior or during enrollment. Internal risk factors are comprised of, (a) a struggle with academic and social integration and (b) physical and mental health related complications. Students struggle to meet academic norms such as passing rigorous gatekeeper courses due to a lack of academic preparation and to difficulties selecting a major (Gainen, 1995). Students also reported negative experiences interacting with campus groups, peers, or “fitting in” to the social cultures of the institution. The physical and mental health challenges these participants faced were similar to the physical and emotional stressors that adversely influenced college students in the achievement and attainment literature. In addition, three students experienced more severe bouts with mental illness and/or physical medical conditions including, HIV, narcolepsy, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

As illustrated in Table 10, over 60% ($n=14$) of participants described the internal risks to success as related to academic and social integration and physical and mental health challenges. Students' socioeconomic status is often directly linked to external risks such as financial resource related pressures. Nine Black men (39%) experienced financial resource related risks to attainment including lack of monetary resources for educational purposes due to incarceration, loss of academic scholarships, and the need to support themselves or family members financially.

Table 9
Percent and Number of Participants by Risk Factor Type and Description (N = 23)

Participants % (#)	Internal and External Risk Factors	
	Type	Description
21.7% (5)	Internal #1 Academic Integration	Underprepared for college level academic work
13% (3)	Internal #1 Social Integration	Sense of belonging negatively impacted on campus
26% (6)	Internal #2 Physical Health and Mental	Severe physical, emotional, and/or psychological health conditions adversely impacting attainment
39.1% (9)	External Financial Resource Related	Financial related stressors negatively impacting attainment

Internal Risk Factor One: Deficient Academic and Social Integration

Eight participants explained that their initial year at WSU was plagued with academic success-threatening experiences, as they dealt with problems selecting a major, achieving in college level and remedial courses due to unpreparedness, and significant challenges navigating

the new social environment. These students labored to fit in academically and socially on the WSU campus.

***“I felt unprepared for this...”*: Academic (dis)Integration.** Participants stated that their lack of preparation for the academic rigors of college was a major challenge to their academic success that resulted in acute feelings of despondency that caused many of them to consider dropping out of college completely. E.J., a 27-year-old recent graduate who entered WSU as a freshman highlighted this issue, saying, “I could say one of my specific challenges [was] my writing skills.” E.J. spoke about how he constantly battled with the thought of quitting and, like many of the young men who suffered early on in their academic careers, he attributed his struggles to a lack of academic readiness:

[So] when I came to college and I was just writing papers, teachers are bringing them back to me [with *low* marks] and I’m like, ‘What is this?’ Like, I am usually excelling at this in my high school. But then I found out that, we weren’t taught this in high school. We weren’t taught those skills, those writing skills and how important it is. So when I came to college I wasn’t prepared. I was underdeveloped, you know?

Steve, a 2008 graduate of WSU who will be completing his MBA in the spring, talked about similar academic challenges. He stated, “The major challenge I can remember is the fact I failed the placement test. And why I say this is because when I failed the placement test I was [placed] in remedial classes.” Steve, who admittedly failed his first two writing assignments at WSU, echoed E.J.’s sentiments about lack of preparation for college work in high school:

I think that high school doesn’t prepare you enough. They really need a college planning office. Not outside of guidance, a college planning office that explains to you these things – how to prepare for college work and you know, helps you out – get ready.

Like E.J., Steve thought about quitting given his advisors’ estimate of his time to degree as a result of remediation. Steve explained, “When they told me it was going to take me seven or eight years to get my Bachelors I was like, ‘I’m not going to finish this thing, man.’ I used to call

my mom everyday like, I'm not going to finish – it's over.” Academic hurdles are not unique to first time freshmen. James who transferred to WSU from a 2-year community college struggled to handle college level work at the University. He recalled:

My first classes here at WSU were in my major – developmental psychology. The professor – that was the first professor that really put it on us, like challenged us in the class. And I'm saying that because I realize it wasn't just me struggling but she had a really high expectation of us and was not flinching. So that was my first, I think that was the first time I ever like felt like that [quitting].

Like ill-prepared, first-time freshmen, many students who transfer from 2-year colleges receive subpar instruction in academic skills development, including proper study techniques. James talked at length about how he felt unprepared for the upper level psychology course. When I asked him, “What type of preparedness do you think you were missing, and why?” he responded, “I would say probably in my habits. I was never pushed to study to put so much into my studies although I did value it. But it just, yeah, this was just the longest I ever spent studying was for this class up to this point!” Lack of adequate educational training and negative academic experiences adversely affect Black college men's academic self-efficacy.

Similar to James, Florence, a 44-year-old, 2013 graduate of WSU transferred to the University from a 4-year HBCU. Florence attended the HBCU two decades prior, and his poor academic experiences left him ill-equipped for college level work and in need of additional support while at WSU. He stated, “The last time that I was in a classroom setting although there were a whole lot of extraneous factors, I didn't do well. So there was that piece, also the fear that I may not be able to swing this.” Returning to college at age 42 as a Nursing major, Florence described his feelings of sitting in, ironically, a BSN transition course at WSU as being “a little bit overwhelming” as he dealt with a professor who was somewhat less responsive than he

expected. Florence maintained he was often lost in the course, unable to keep pace and could not make a meaningful connection with the professor. He fervently illustrated his frustration:

So I felt like giving up! And that was my very first class, upon entering Weaver State. So given all that I have felt up until that point, getting into the program and having this experience with this professor kind of left me a little bewildered.

While many of the challenges confronted by the participants centered on academic underperformance, Kareem's swirling between institutions resulted in a unique academic integration dilemma. Kareem transferred to WSU after attending three colleges in 2 years: an out-of-state HBCU, an in-state university, and a local community college. Due to a lack of focus (perhaps poor academic advisement) on credit and course requirements for a desirable field of study, he found himself unable to identify a major at WSU. Shaking his head, he explained his frustration:

So I came back home and I just really pondered a lot about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to end up. So you know now you got to really start from almost rock-bottom again! I think that's the time I felt like I was going to quit [college], when I had to change my major. That was the time – I felt like I didn't know what I wanted to major in. I couldn't make up – I was just stumped. I had to break down every department of the University and really think about what I wanted to do and I think at that point, after all this time, I felt like I really, really wanted to give up!

These men faced unique academic performance issues ranging from being ill-prepared for college level work to returning to an academically rigorous environment years later. Most sobering in regard to their under-preparedness is that many college students participate in remedial curriculum programs upon enrollment, and these men's immediate feelings of failure signified the existence of underlying issues with self-confidence juxtaposed with some lack of awareness about the expectations of college. The next section examines findings on students' lack of senses of belongingness at WSU.

“It was hard finding where I fit in.”: Fractured Sense of Belonging. Permeating throughout the retention and persistence literature is the concept of social integration, which has been linked to student engagement, involvement, satisfaction, and attainment (Strayhorn, 2008b; Tinto, 1993). The social integration model holds that students who become engrained in the campus community through involvement in sports and social activities develop a bond with the institution and are more likely to graduate than their counterparts. This concept is closely associated with fit or a sense of belonging (Hausmann, Schofield & Woods, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008b), which is based largely on how the individual defines his or her position within a group. In relation to the experiences of the Black college men in this study, three identified difficulties developing a sense of belonging on campus and had feelings of stopping-out due to lack of fit. For instance, Terrell a 31-year-old, 2011 graduate of WSU had issues with a sense of belonging due to his age and prior experiences. Terrell was first admitted in 2000 as a first-time freshman and had completed 2 years at Weaver State prior to enlisting in the Navy. He described his 2009 return to the University as follows:

When I came back I said, well let me try the campus dorm thing. So when I came back I dormed here. So for me, being in a dorm, it was like, I just felt like I wanted that college experience that you see on TV, like ‘A Different World’ and other shows like that. But I just felt like you know, it was a completely different – like that age difference, I just felt like I couldn’t relate, I really wasn’t participating.

He explained his discomfort with the institution,

I just feel like here although people will say WSU it’s very diverse, you have the Egyptians, or Indians, you know you have Filipinos you know you have Blacks, you have Whites, Spanish you know. But I feel like it’s all for the most part an urban culture, everybody is the same!

Terrell’s frustration stemmed from experiencing the world through his Naval travels but returning to an environment that was not within the scope of his expectations. He was essentially

a non-traditional student seeking a traditional college experience, “So I feel like here [WSU] I didn’t get that, I just didn’t like this school. I wanted to quit!”

Similar to Terrell’s experience, Omolayo, a scholarship student and Zach, a Kenyan immigrant--both graduates of Weaver State--struggled to find their niches socially while attending the university. These two provided additional accounts of Black men’s challenges to developing a sense of belonging. Omolayo was concerned with engaging in the social ethos that seemed prevalent among many of his WSU Black male peers, but ran counter to his moral character. He shared that he was unable to identify socially or intellectually outside of the classroom with particular groups of Black male students during his freshman year who were preoccupied with binge drinking and womanizing. He said, “It was hard finding out where I fit in, you know? Where is my crew, where is my group of people, where is my group of friends.” Earning his bachelor’s degree over 4 years ago, the frustration Omolayo experienced while attempting to engage socially was still fresh. Like Terrell, Omolayo had issues finding his place within WSU’s social environment and opted to distance himself socially from his peers. When asked how practicing social distancing impacted his college life, he stated, “It made me an outcast.” His ordeal is summarized in the following account:

I want[ed] to have a social life; I want[ed] to have fun and do stuff. But I had to make a decision of who I wanted to be, and what does that person do? How do I spend my time productively and do I start now or later. There was certain stuff I just had to separate myself from, the stuff I couldn’t take part in. You know?

Conversely, Zach disclosed how he was on the cusp of risking his educational opportunity by overindulging in some of the unhealthy customs of college social life.

Before WSU, within the large African community here in the city, I wasn’t African enough for them, because I didn’t speak with enough of an African accent. And then with my American friends, I wasn’t American enough, because I didn’t speak kind of American enough. So I’m just caught in the middle like, who knows what I am. But at Weaver, for the first time, besides in grammar school, I started to mingle with people of

different races, you know White, Hispanics, Latino, and Asians and we go party together. It was great! But For me, I wanted to go to the clubs all the time, and ended up going overboard sometimes.

Excited about the prospects of engaging with other WSU students and given his previous rejection, Zach made decisions that could have jeopardized his safety by drinking heavily and by attending parties in violence-prone locations. He said,

You know there was always a gun at some Black parties, or somebody got shot somewhere. I didn't have to go to those parties. But I went out of my way to be there. Self inflicted challenges.

The previous section described the frustration and isolation faced by the Black men in this study who were desperately seeking the traditional college experience. These men had perceptions of the ideal college social lifestyle that did not fit with their self-concepts as individuals. In the ensuing section, participants' experiences with the challenges that stemmed from physical and mental health conditions are discussed.

Internal Risk Factor Two: Physical and Mental Health Challenges

Over a quarter ($n=6$) of the men who participated in this study identified several physical and mental health related conditions as stumbling blocks to their success while enrolled at Weaver State University. They recounted the adversity of coping with various ailments such as HIV, narcolepsy, low-level depression, guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem.

“It's always in the back of my mind as far as being sick”: Physical Health

Conditions. Two Black men in is this study reported suffering from severe physical health conditions that posed distinct threats to their college completion. Forty-four-year-old Thomas graduated from WSU in 2013 with a bachelor's degree in Health Sciences. He disclosed that he had been diagnosed HIV positive 25 years ago:

I'm HIV positive. I became HIV positive in 1988 when I was 18 years old. And I took really ill in 1996 and then in 2006. So that's always on the back of my mind as far as that

[completing college]. Like initially when I was first diagnosed. It was back in 1988, it was pretty much a death sentence and people went very rapidly.

Thomas, an openly gay man, spoke about how the virus jeopardized his degree attainment. He said, “I’m saying okay 2016 is coming soon will I get sick again but it’s just a matter of just me taking care of myself. It’s always in the back of my mind as far as being sick, the medications and everything are a lot different and people last a lot longer these days. So [pause] but the thought is always there as far as ever getting sick and missing school where I can’t finish.”

Like Thomas, Veinte also reported how he was required to manage narcolepsy, a severe neurological disorder, in order to obtain his degree. Veinte entered WSU as a freshman majoring in English, and graduated 5 years later, in 2008. Now enrolled in graduate school, he recalled being first diagnosed with the condition,

When I was in fourth grade, they realized that I was sleeping a lot in class. And that was a medical issue, that I had to get testing for and all of that. I was diagnosed [pause] so that’s been a problem for me because, you know it deals with the mental, like memorizing things and, just like sleeping a lot, you know I wasn’t alert.

In addition to having “bad mood swings,” Veinte talked about the impact of the condition on his overall functioning as a student,

So basically, like I sleep a lot. If I don’t take the medication, I will dose off or I sometimes forget things. I’m not focused, like sometimes in class. When I was an undergraduate, I tend to just go into a depression. It deals with the brain, so a lot of brain functions, you know, as far as memorization, and verbal communication. One minute, I am talking, and going on a tangent, the other I am sort of like being fluent. So it affects my cognitive functioning at times.

Interestingly, the physical health conditions these two men were required to circumnavigate created significant emotional issues, such as fear and anxiety. Comparable to Thomas’ trepidations, Veinte’s condition presented a perpetual sense of anticipation that negatively impacted his overall self-confidence, which in turn threatened his attainment. He said,

Because you know, you had this thing, this health issue behind you and what you are thinking about – when is it going to kick in and mess everything up for me? He went on to say, “It still affects me today, because it's still a problem, I mean this is something I have to live with. So that's why I – you know my confidence level was really up and down sometimes.

Indeed, numerous college students suffer from physical illnesses. The life-threatening illnesses afflicting Veinte and Thomas were particularly difficult for them to deal with given the uncertainty of occurrences and the college setting. It is critical for individuals infected with HIV, like Thomas, to limit and effectively manage stressful situations. Pursuing a Bachelors degree can produce numerous stressful circumstances. Being narcoleptic on a college campus can pose numerous safety concerns given the cataplexy, hallucinations, and fatigue associated with the disease. While Veinte distinguished his physical condition as success-threatening, the psychological impact was equally detrimental--attacking his confidence—and it diminished his college experience. The next part of Internal Risk Factor Two focuses on mental health related barriers to attainment.

Four of the Black male students in the study gave accounts of experiences with emotional and psychological turmoil that negatively impacted their achievement and attainment at WSU. For instance, Jerry a 28-year-old, 2008 graduate of WSU spoke of his experience with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which developed after being deployed to Iraq and engaging repeatedly in combat. Jerry recalled, “Yes I did see combat.” He added, “I was able to survive. I have a [pause] you know colleagues who were killed in war.” His combat experiences and his losing friends in battle left him with deep psychological scars, and his comment suggested that the degree to which he suffered from PTSD made him feel helpless while in college.

It kind of made me become somewhat depressed. It was a traumatic event – I guess the depression I had was like, in class, everywhere I kept thinking about what I just experienced and it was somewhat surreal to me. I still couldn't believe that I was back in the United States. You know mentally I was still back over there in Iraq but physical I

realized okay I'm here. So I was dealing with a lot you know after Iraq but at the same time I knew that – I knew that I had succeeded. It was stressful at times, I felt like giving up. You know I thought about many reasons to stop [quit school] you know.

Nick, a junior majoring in psychology, discussed experiencing survivor's guilt; a term largely used in literature describing the emotional state of holocaust survivors. However, Piorkowski (1983) adopted the term to describe the internal guilt of success experienced by first-generation, low SES, minority, college students while attending college. Nick described the internal stress of straddling two conflicting social environments – the inner-city and academia – stating, “That guilt is like, this is a grown man situation that you have got to identify and recognize it, that you feel like you're selling out by bettering yourself.” Unlike Jerry, Nick found himself at times intentionally jeopardizing his academic career as a result of feelings of guilt. He stated, “When I would go home on weekends, I would like to try to act out, like try to prove to them [family and friends] that I'm the same person don't get it twisted.”

Billy's internal conflict centered on what Festinger (1957) defined as *cognitive dissonance*: the extreme psychological conflict a person experiences when they simultaneously possess conflicting values and principles. Billy, a devote Baptist recovering from a 20-year addiction to crack cocaine, had difficulty reconciling his religious beliefs with the theories of his academic major, psychology. He said that he credited his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with saving him from the perils of drug addiction. In terms of the major challenges Billy faced in college, he expressed, “I had to deal with the element of, ‘this is psychology, and there's no room for God’.” He felt that the response he received from psychology professors not only negated his experience of overcoming the psychological and physical torment of addiction, but was also a missed opportunity to discuss the psychology of religion. When he attempted to talk faith in class Billy described his professor's response as follows:

This is psychology; you don't come to this class talking about God because there is no precursor, the Bible has never been a precursor for anything, you can't prove this through science," you know, stuff like that. I had to grapple with that.

Leo suffered from severe self-esteem issues that kept him from participating in class and ultimately impacted his grades. This interview excerpt summarizes his struggle with self-confidence:

- Leo: I had a lot of regrets; I had a lot of regrets about not participating enough or not participating at all. It just used to keep entering my mind about what if.
- Interviewer: Did that impact your grades any because I'm assuming class participation is like 10 or 20% - did that affect you?
- Leo: It did. A couple times cause my Professor at the end of the semester [said], 'You could've had this grade if you'd participate more,' so it did affect my grade considerably.
- Interviewer: And so that was something that made you feel that you wouldn't be able to finish college – because of this issue?
- Leo: Yeah, I was thinking that I wasn't as good as the other students because they was participating more. I thought they was better than me or smarter than me cause they always had something to say. So I'd always thought I wasn't on their level.

Leo described a debilitating experience with self-doubt. His feeling of inferiority was a result of underdeveloped verbal communication skills that ultimately impacted his grades.

This section provided an overview of the health-related dilemmas confronted by participants. Over the last two decades, student health issues have been solidly on the agenda of campus leaders and policy makers in the US and abroad. Colleges and universities have witnessed horrific tragedies relative to psychological disorder and have prepared feverishly for physical health pandemics. For many participants in this study, their interviews mark the first time they had disclosed their health issues to someone outside of their immediate support system. It is critical that Black men continue to share their experiences early and seek assistance with

coping with their illnesses. The next section reviews a major external risk Black male collegians face, financial barriers.

External Risk Factor: Financial Barriers to College Completion

In this section, I discuss the dominant external risk factor--financial barriers--that had a significant impact on the college persistence of the participants'. Several participants identified lack of financial resources as a key barrier to their educational attainment. The existing literature documents how the lack of financial resources has had an adverse effect on the retention and attainment of Black men in higher education. Rising tuition coupled with decreasing financial aid has been detrimental to many Black male collegians' paths to obtaining college degrees. The African American men in this study talked about the financial burden of paying tuition and supporting themselves and/or their families, and they described how that burden impacted their educational journeys.

***“There were some days I would go to school just hungry”*: Heterogeneous Financial Hardships.** One example is that of Joseph, a 22-year-old senior, who, along with his parents, were financing his education through grants, scholarships, and family contributions, but were struggling to make ends meet at home. Joseph talked about this hardship.

My issue was mostly money. Because even in recent times, even today like my family we still are going through financial hardships. You know, it really has taken a toll and now I'm just really – I'm just really ready to go. Just so I could just not worry about pain, and worry about my mom crying, or worry about sacrificing this and that and that really does take a toll. I mean you know we're fine, we're okay. They support my brother, and me so we're not complaining about that it's just the money keeps on going, we get it, it goes, we get it, it goes.

He continued by describing how the financial situation impacted his academic experiences.

“Well it affected me a lot. It made me push harder and focus even more on finishing school early. And that's why I started to take six classes and work in the summer; and I did that for the

past four semesters.” Joseph intensively attended classes 2 days per week, 12 hours per day from 10:00am through 10:00pm in order to build in a work schedule for the remainder of the week.

Like Joseph, Sheak, a senior Economics major, also felt the financial burden associated with paying for college. He said, “Money was a struggle, I didn’t have no money. No I really didn’t! I didn’t know where I was going to get any money. My mother supported me, but even with that it runs out sometime.” He continued,

Grades suffered from a personal standpoint because I knew I could do better you know. At first you know somebody else looking at your grade at first blush may say well overall the kid is pretty descent you know. But I knew that I could do better and I knew that the reason why my grades were lagging behind like this was because of the personal issues that I was going through.

When Sheak first entered WSU, he was married, unemployed, and living with his wife in a single-room apartment. He described his frustrating situation, “You know it’s hard to have concentration. Like there were some days I would go to school just hungry, you know and just nothing to eat. I felt like quitting school, I was like, ‘man, is all this worth it?’” Unmet, his basic needs put him at risk of dropping out of school. Nasir also described how finances presented a challenge to his degree completion. He commented, “This is like my first year at WSU; that happened in January.” Nasir a senior Psychology major with a 3.28 GPA was doing well in his courses and deeply worried about having to “leave and find a job.” Shaking his head with his eyes closed he said, “The biggest thing would have to be me having my son. What made it even tougher was that my ex-girlfriend was living in North Carolina and I’m here in school over 500 miles away!”

Urban, a 31-year-old senior Finance major moved out of his parent’s home and became independent in his second year at WSU. Unfortunately, he lost his full academic scholarship because he was unable to meet the full-time enrollment criteria of the scholarship. As a result of

losing his scholarship, he had to work full-time and his time to degree was extended over a decade. He explained this situation as follows:

I think the major challenge was, initially I came in – I was on a scholarship, I was going to school full time. So starting here in 2003, it's now 2013, so it has been ten years, this is my last semester, thank God, it's been a long struggle. I think a lot of times, I have often had to pick career path and personal finance over school and straddle them and sometimes school had to take a backburner to working. So sometimes, I would have to withdraw for the semester in the middle of the semester.

Urban's grades suffered significantly throughout college as he attempted to balance his educational and work related responsibilities. He recalled that, since his sophomore year in college,

Sometimes I would attempt to hold like two classes, and think I can make it, and then not even be able to attend class. So of course you get an F or a D. So I think that impacted the GPA, so I would say, that was a struggle. I need to be able to support myself!

Two participants, Megaman and Woody, were both convicted of crimes prior to enrolling at WSU. Megaman's statement summarized the financial issues that arose for him as a result of a felony conviction.

So I got arrested. They fingerprinted me. They read me my charges, and I bailed myself out all in the day. My bail was set at \$100,000 so that had been \$10,000 to get out. And that day my lawyer made a phone call got it reduced to \$10,000 so all I had to pay was a \$1,000; so I went in the court house paid \$1,000 and I went home. After it was all said and done, I spent all my money on the lawyer.

Megaman added, "The next semester I had defaulted on loans. And so I couldn't get financial aid so I took a year off." Unlike Megaman, Woody was sentenced to 15 months in federal prison and served 10 for theft of mail by federal employee as a result of his involvement in a credit card scam while working for the U.S. Postal Service. Woody eventually enrolled in WSU, but was unable to expunge his federal offense, and so he experienced complications financing his education. He stated,

The major challenge at that time was finance, of course, because I didn't make a lot of money. You know setback from the arrest. You're a grown ass man and you are still making under \$12 an hour, it's not good! I had a family and I had kids, and then it was the breakup. Because I wasn't the best person in the world at that time, it was my own mental anguish that I put on myself, saying that you know you're not going to make it

While it is widely understood that Black men struggle to finance college, the cause of financial hardship often goes unnoticed. The fact is, Black men struggle with various types of social issues from incarceration to fatherhood. Success in college requires sizeable emotional, physical, and financial investments. The psychic energy required to navigate these and other adversities takes a considerable toll on the focus and confidence of Black male collegians. Many of the hardships faced by the participants complicated their journeys to college attainment by extending time to degree, increasing loan indebtedness, shaking their academic confidence, and dangerously increasing their physical and psychological stress levels; coupled with negotiating typical transition issues encountered by college students. Despite these hardships, what remained consistent among the participants was their drive to obtain a college degree. The next section discusses the protective factors the Black men who participated in this study selected and deployed that positively influenced their persistence and attainment.

Selecting and Deploying Protective Factors

To counter the copious amounts of risk to academic success and attainment examined in the preceding section, Black men employ equally complex responses, including combinations (Morales, 2010) of protective factors such as (a) strong self-efficacy, (b) internal locus of control, (c) spirituality, determination and (d) leveraging of peers, family members, institutional student support services, and mentors (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper, 2006b, 2009a; Hébert, 2002; Moore et al., 2003; Morales &

Trotman, 2011; Museus, 2011; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Riggins et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2008b; Watson, 2006; Williamson, 2010).

In this section, I discuss three central levels of protective factors that Black male participants in this study used to counter and/or recover from threats (a detailed description of each protective factor is provided in Table 11). Situated within each protective level are factors unique to this study. Within individual level protective factors, some students adopted what was identified as a *no-options mentality* relative to their attainment. Students adopting this mentality explained that they made an internal decision to obtain their undergraduate degree despite the risk factor; acknowledging that stopping out was not an option because to do so meant falling victim to the societal ills of their communities. The Black men who identified with the no option mentality believed that college was their last hope of escaping their current less desirable upbringing, at times defining their persistence and attainment as a life or death situation.

Study participants also identified an uncommon, family-level, protective factor as well: wives and children. Within the literature, this protective factor includes parents, siblings, and grandparents as individuals depended upon for assistance. In this study however, the Black men stated that they relied on their wives and children as a source of motivation. Lastly, social environmental level protective factors consist of institutionalized and grassroots retention and student service centered programs (Olssen et al., 2003). Participants in this study talked extensively about “reaching out” to key institutional programs, faculty, staff, and/or peers for assistance with their particular success-threatening barrier. Particularly noteworthy are those who were proactive help seekers, who activated this protective factor as the initial step as opposed to the last resort.

Table 10
Percent and Number of Participants by Protective Factor Level (N = 23)

Participants % (#)	Protective Factor	
	Type	Description
56.5% (13)	Individual Level	Students possessed high levels of: Spirituality, Self-Efficacy, Determination, and Internal Locus of Control – Students adopted a by any means necessary mentality
43.4% (10)	Family Level	Students tapped into parental units to assist with navigating risk. Wives, and children were also identified as an essential motivational factor.
78.2% (18)	Social Environmental Level	Students actively sought out assistance from: Financial Aid Office, Tutoring Center, Veterans’ Support Group, ONE Male Mentoring Program, External Health Care Providers, and Supportive Peers

“By any means necessary...”: Individual Level Protective Factors

When describing how they coped with threat, 13 (56.5%) participants mentioned an internalized conversation by which they rejected the desire to withdraw--considering it a non-option, and embracing the impending adversity and sacrifice associated with academic success that would come with remaining enrolled at WSU. In this study, Black male determination was influenced by: a strong belief in one’s self, the prospects of social mobility, and spiritual faith. Ultimately, participants believed they were in control of their academic destinies, assumed responsibility, and made personal sacrifices to invest in their goals.

***“I’m going to achieve this goal”*: Self-efficacy, Sacrifice & Dedication.** When asked how they navigated their respective academic stumbling blocks, 8 (34.7%) participants made mention of having a belief in their ability to overcome based on prior, albeit unrelated, success experiences. These men expressed ardently that they remained enrolled through remarkable self-sacrifice and an unyielding dedication to the prospect of upward mobility. For some, the stakes were high, as they believed their struggle for success was a matter of life or death.

Florence, for example, 20 years removed from a college classroom, struggled to keep pace with the rigors and course content of a BSN transition course, and he received no guidance from the inaccessible faculty member teaching the course. When I asked him how he addressed the difficulty of reintegrating back into academe and dealing with an unresponsive faculty member, he stated,

Not feeding into my thoughts that, I can’t get through this! Or not focus so much on her [professor] but on me, and what I need to do to get through this course. I need to, by any means necessary find out how I need to learn this material and pass this course.

Florence discussed how his previous experiences helped him determine to achieve his academic goals at WSU,

I guess, after recovery from substances, I’ve learned that, I don’t have the power to change anybody other than myself. And so, I could choose to spend a whole lot of time and energy, on a person or a situation, or I could adjust my response to it. What I’ve come to find is that, if I focus less on you or the problem and focus on me and the solution, I tend to spend a lot less time and energy and frustration. I can navigate through the situation easier.

He added,

Well the good thing about I guess experience is that you know – as you get older you work around a whole bunch of different people, different personalities. And remembering why I’m there [at WSU], remembering that I am there to succeed, I have a goal – I’m going to achieve this goal, allowed me to focus less on her [professor] and more on me.

As mentioned in the discussion on threats to college persistence, James also grappled with the

workload of his initial class at WSU and, like Florence, he was determined to succeed and was proactive in pursuing a solution. He stated, “Yeah, my first instinct was to fight. So what I decided to do was to speak to the professor, that’s the first thing I did. And it’s not like this made it any easier, she was like, ‘What do you want me to do?’” He added,

The next step was pretty much investing way more time than usual, or than I did before, up to that point, in reading those chapters and preparing for those tests. I had to stick with it put in so much more work! The end result, I did okay I passed the class but I think it was my lowest grade, C or C+; I’m not sure but it was definitely great!

James also reflected on what drove his determination and proaction, and this included his continued experiences with poverty after immigrating to the Unites States from Haiti at age 6 with his parents and sister. He recalled a deprived upbringing, during which, unbeknownst to his parents, he unsuccessfully sought employment at the age of 14. James believed that a college degree was his only chance to excel beyond his disadvantaged roots. The following interview passage illustrates his attitude.

James: [Pause] I’m just I’m trying to think back to what was the reason behind wanting to make it and finishing college a priority; because it definitely didn’t come from my family. It was just something a personal thing for me like something I just wanted to achieve.

Interviewer: Why so? If it didn’t come from the family – where? It didn’t come from school because guidance counselors didn’t bother to tell you to apply to college, right?

James: Right, definitely not from high school guidance counselors. I just I saw a college degree getting that BA as a way to change myself. Like stepping outside of what I’m used to – like stepping away from my current social class that I’m in – as a way out pretty much is what I was trying to say. Yeah, I would say that’s what I would say.

Interviewer: So were you reflecting on when you were 15, 14 years old and watching your mom go through financial hardships?

James: Right! Looking going back to days and I just don’t want that! And another thing towards my last year of college that’s when I started to make sense of certain things that I’ve been doing. I had no choice! The reason I earned

myself this bachelors is just as a way out because the way I see it my mother was just working to get us through school.

Nick recalled an incident--an epiphany--during which his degree aspirations were reinforced and his issue with survivor guilt reconciled. Ultimately, like James, his determination was stimulated by a conscious effort to avoid the pitfalls associated with his poverty-stricken urban environment. He stated,

One of my uncles and his friend, were sitting and talking about one of his kid's mothers, and how many times he has been in jail, and all that nonsense. I am like saying to myself, "I will not be that dude!" I remember that day like it was a regular day, I just went downstairs I washed my face, brushed my teeth and I overheard that and I looked at him and I thought, "I will not be you!" And after that, I was like man if anybody feel some type of way about me going to school, we can fight and do whatever because I ain't coming back here and just wasting my time [laughing]. You only get one life; I am not going to blow this to please you on this block [street] that's not going anywhere. It wasn't no more guilt, and I didn't care anymore about what they felt!

Nick believed that abandoning guilt and dedicating himself to academic pursuits was a matter of life and death; he had no choice, as illustrated in this passage:

I just look at it is going to be this or it is going to be that, meaning jail, death, hospital beds or it's going to be school like, it just made sense to me, you know, I really didn't have a choice. Like I felt like I am a logical thinker and it made sense to come to school and just do what you got to do and at the end of the day. Like the stuff that you are going through at school don't compare to home. All you got to worry about is a paper or turning in assignment or being on time [shaking head]? On the street you got to worry about somebody really busting your head open. So it is anything I came across in school is not a road block, it is a speed bump. I am going to get over it.

Similar to Nick, Sheak employed what he called a "do or die mode," in which he too perceived there to be no viable option but to dedicate himself to his academics, sacrificing personal finances and delaying gratification. He explained the "do or die mode",

The do or die mode is I'm either going to do this or I'm going to die doing this, or I'm going to die trying to do this you know? Your doing something about it [finances] going to school, trying to get an education, that's your motivation to get out of your situation. If you don't do that what else do you have to live for, that's my mentality. I'd rather try this [college], and have some light at the end of the tunnel. Even though I know it's a long road, but what are you giving it up for, to continue to live like that [destitute]?

Like Sheak, Joseph's risk issue centered on financing college. He used an individual-level protective factor to deal with the lack of adequate funds. His plan was to dedicate himself to reducing his time to degree by overloading on credits and taking advantage of the flat tuition fee at WSU that became effective after enrolling in excess of 12 credits. He explained,

I don't have the money to be in school for 5 – 6 years, so for me to get more money I have got to finish school, and for me to finish school I have got to pass this paper or this test. So I took extra classes like 6 classes a semester, couple days a week, 10:00 am to 10:pm and then we still work at the same time. I'm still going to go through that little money issue though but you know, I think of it as a pass one semester bring on another, pass that one, bring another one.

The men in this study were driven by an inner belief that they could accomplish their academic goals. Inspired by past success or spurred by a deprived present, they fully dedicated themselves and sacrificed time and money in exchange for an indeterminately improved standard of living. The following counter-narratives provide an overview of the importance of faith and religion for academic outcomes.

***“I prayed”*: Faith Based Persistence.** As many as 7 students described their faith and religion as catalysts for college persistence while enrolled at WSU. This interview selection is from Megaman's interview and is his interpretation of the influence of faith on his success after his arrest:

Interviewer: When did everything change for you? What helped you get through your issues? You completed the probation, then you had this little issue with the student government, when did you really focus and say, “Look, I don't have any more issues, I'm going to finish school now?”

Megaman: I just joined the church and was an intricate member of that church and I was kind of – there were some things that were going on at the same time. I was being built up in my faith and you know my opinion was being changed about a lot of things, and I just kind of came to this epiphany about finishing school and doing what I wanted to do and making sure that I was satisfied with everything that I did you know...

Megaman credited his then growing faith in Christ as the impetus that propelled him to focus in on achieving his academic goals. He stated,

I was getting closer to God and deep in my faith and that came from joining the Campus Crusade for Christ at WSU, you know. So everything that really reshaped my life and reshaped who I am, it happened at WSU – and it helped me to recover from it all.

Billy, a devout Baptist, revealed that for nearly 25 years, “I battled a – I had a one-on-one fight with drugs and alcohol. I ended up using crack cocaine mixing it with marijuana and cigars, what’s known as blunts.” Billy explained that his belief in Jesus saved him from a life of addiction and violent crime. Ten years after completing an inpatient treatment program, Billy enrolled at WSU as a psychology major. He explained that from the moment he accepted Christ, faith became a defining feature of his life’s story. He talked about how his spirituality motivated him to remain a psychology major despite struggling to reconcile that his perspectives on faith would occasionally be challenged, specifically in the classroom when discussing psychological theories. Billy stated,

I mean this thing [decision to major in psychology] has to be real because I prayed, “God what’s my purpose?” And I hear, "counseling." I tell my wife; I’m like, “I just heard, counseling.” You know. So it just basically was something like a hurdle, it was some adversity. This is a little turbulence, but this too shall pass, you just have to stick in there, because if God told you something and when you think back on that you're like, "This cannot be wrong, you know, this can’t be wrong, so God’s not wrong, so I have to press forward no matter what it takes.

Brothers, Joseph and Leo, said that religion had been interweaved into the lifestyle of their family since their childhood. The brothers acknowledged their Christian faith as a protective factor that they called upon while enrolled at WSU to guide them through their college hardships. The following is Joseph’s account of how he relied on his faith to support his attainment,

Interviewer: Anybody help you with that strategy [organizing], did you talk to anyone about it?

Joseph: I never told anybody about organizing things because I feel that nobody can motivate me but me, you know. People can tell me all they want but still I felt like that they can't do it for me, I have got to do it. But what I do is – I pray a lot so if anything – like I would ask Jesus to help me out, but you know I definitely believe that a lot of people you know they'll be like, "Yeah, yeah," but me, I believe in Him.

Interviewer: So you look to a higher power? And that's the person that or entity that you identify to help you?

Joseph: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What about your relationship with Jesus? Tell me a little bit about that.

Joseph: Oh my belief in Jesus it's very strong ever since I was little, I prayed every night, but starting three years ago I started to fully – stopped playing around and fully believe. You know of course I go through my little faults but like I know that He loves me so and He knows I'm not perfect only He is perfect so like you know I'm doing what I got to do. I pray to him for everything! Whenever I take a test I pray, whenever I have an issue I pray. Like even a few days ago - my degree progress report said I was unsatisfactory, I prayed about it and then the next day, yesterday - everything was fine, I got all the work completely done.

Likewise, Leo expressed that God was instrumental in his success. He gave the following testimony:

Interviewer: What I'd like to know is – how did you manage to make it? You graduated, how many years did it take you to graduate?

Leo: It took me two years to get my undergraduate degree, to get my Bachelor's and it's gonna take me four years to get my Masters. I made it by going to church, going to church, that played a big part of the second part of my college life.

Interviewer: Really? How so, tell me about that.

Leo: Sure, I became closer to the Lord, I was baptized in 2011 with my family; my dad, my brother, and me and me were baptized in the summer of 2011. So I feel that more spiritual, I felt more humble, more grateful to be baptized. It was a renewed, life changing experience to be baptized because it made me think that God has given me a second chance to make

it to start my life over again. I felt like I was starting over again to become a better person and I was going to church a lot and I learned about the Lord and it was just making, life made so much more sense to me.

Interviewer: So do you equate your spirituality and your belief in God to your success?

Leo: Yes. I think that played a huge factor in me becoming successful. I believe God was giving me revelation after revelation he was giving me signs about what to do, what not to do. I was looking at him as my guide to succeed in college. And I also listen to gospel music; I'm a big gospel music fan, which also played a huge key in making it this far.

Participants acknowledged faith as being a guiding factor in their academic persistence. They were not pedestrian in seeking out help and applying themselves. In fact, many prayed for guidance on decisions they were considering in relation to their respective risk factors. The next portion of this section is devoted to a discussion of familial-level protective factors.

***“F.O.E. that’s my motto, Family Over Everything”*: Family Level Protective Factors.**

Familial protective factors have been linked to Black male students’ academic success and ability to attain a college education (Brown, 2008; Morales & Trotman, 2011; Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991). Ten participants explicitly recognized family related factors as being instrumental to their academic resilience while experiencing hardship in college. These factors included: (a) a cohesive family unit, (b) encouraging parents and/or siblings with high expectations, and (c) supportive spouses.

***“The only way I bounce back from that was honestly my parents.”*: The Cohesive Family Unit.** Leo, who struggled significantly with self-esteem issues--specifically his verbal communication skills and self-confidence--credited his parents, particularly his father, with assisting him through his ordeal.

Interviewer: So I want to know, what did you do to get through it? What was the first thing you did? What were your thoughts?

Leo: I was thinking to myself that I could do it as if I had the chance to talk in

class. I got through this obstacle by talking to my parents, especially my dad; I'm real close to my parents. So I used to talk to my dad about how I did in the classroom with the participation. So my dad said 'Son, how you do in class?' I said 'Not too good dad.' cause he saw my head down and then he gave me pointers or advice as to what I could do to become successful in future classes.

Interviewer: Well what type of advice did he give you?

Leo: He said to just -- he said I could talk to the Professor before hand to let her know how I'm feeling before the class or after class. Or he said I could talk to the students to create a rapport, a bond with them so I could become more comfortable in class. He also said to practice talking in the mirror to help me with my confidence. My dad and my mom are real wise parents.

Interviewer: So, that was the first thing that you did? The first thing you did was go to your parents and you got that advice?

Leo: Right, I talk to my dad all the time, every time about how I did in class.

Interviewer: Yeah, so once you got that advice, how did you feel?

Leo: I felt motivated, I felt like, 'I got this!' I just got to -- it's all about taking action, taking initiative to try something new.

Nasir also reported receiving guidance from both of his parents as he dealt with the pregnancy of his ex-girlfriend, who lived over 500 miles away. Nasir said,

“I probably had the closest bond with my parents, you know. So my mother and my father you know sat down and talked about what I should do. I was like, "I know I'm not going to be able to stay here [WSU],”

He added,

I was like, ‘I really don't want to leave you know.’ But I know what I got to do. My parents just said, ‘There's nothing for you in this city [in North Carolina],’ which is right because everybody I chill with either have a kid or felony or they got both. They told me to stay in here and finish. They said they would help me take care of the baby. I felt terrible!

“I was terrified of my parents too.”: Encouraging Parents and Siblings with High

Expectations. Lonnie acknowledged that his parents were “super persistent” with him in regard

to his academic pursuits. However, he talked extensively about what Bandura (1977) labeled observational learning when he discussed the relationship between he and his older brother. He said, “I had a brother that I saw was succeeding in college. So just looking at him and he has always like been in my ear too, encouraging me.” Both Steve and Nick reported the expectations their parents placed upon them regarding their education. Steve said one of the reasons he persisted through college was, “I was terrified of my parents too. I find they put a lot of pressure on me to do the right thing.” Nick’s experiences were similar. He talked about the lofty expectations his father had of him:

As far as my father goes, he used to give - like put good pressure on me to keep going in college! He used to tell me stuff like “You know, you are the future of this family, right?” Like he would say stuff like that to me and after a while it just clicked. I remember the night we were outside talking, I remember closing my eyes and he was like, “You are the future. Like you don’t get it, you don’t even understand what you are doing right now” [college education].

“My biggest support system is my wife.”: Supportive Spouses. While some of the earlier literature on resilience equates family level protective factors exclusively with the parental unit (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1995), Morales and Trotman (2011) found grandparents and “trailblazing” siblings were major familial protective factors in their research. However, a finding unique to the present study is that three Black men--Billy, E.J. and Sheak-- identified their wives as being significant members of their support systems and instrumental in their success. For example, Sheak illustrated this point as he talked about experiencing financial woes while in college:

Sheak: You know I was in a fortunate situation because I had a wife that was really supportive. When I was in that situation of living in a room, to a studio and stuff like that, I mean I didn’t have a wife that was like complaining about money or this and that. Yes she was stressed out about the situation but, you know she looked at it like we had it bad, and we’re in it together.

Interviewer: How would she encourage you?

Sheak: She was encouraging because, she didn't complain, she sort of like she believed in – believed me, and my goals like, “Yeah this could happen. Alright, okay, I'm going to buckle down I got faith, I got faith that you could do it that we could do whatever, so yeah let's do it!”

Interviewer: I think you just hit something on the head, you said she has faith in you she thinks you can do it. What does that do for you?

Sheak: Yeah, yeah, yeah I did, I really did – I felt like she believed in me! She said, a few times she was like, "I'll tell you one thing, you inspired me to go back to school.”

Interviewer: Really?

Sheak: Yeah, she said, “You inspire me to go back to school,” man she said that, “You inspire me to take an interest in learning again.” And you know that idea was amazing because now, she's actually in the same college that I'm in right now and she's majoring in Psychology! So I mean that in a nutshell was amazing.

Not only did E.J. discuss the support he received from his wife beginning his freshman year in college through the completion of his MBA, he also cited his daughter as a source of inspiration.

E.J. discussed the support he received from his wife in the following interview excerpt:

Interviewer: What kind of support does your wife give you? You know while you were in school you had the two kids and...

E.J.: Oh she gave me support because actually, I forgot to mention actually I met her through EOP and she was actually my writing counselor too [laughing] in the summer time and, so she actually got her degree two years prior to me

Interviewer: Okay

E.J.: And she got her masters as well, so she was on the right path as well, we are both on the same track education is important to us. And that is one of the things that helped because I told her we want, I want to be the Huxtables [laughing]! I want to get my doctorate, you know, she'll get hers, or I will be a lawyer and that is our track, and that is what we are doing and we want our kids to get higher than that.

Interviewer: So how does she motivate you?

E.J: I mean that was, that was important. Of course she used to check on me, but I think we made the decision that as long as she took care of her side, I will be good, you know and school work she will just check on me, because she knew that like I could take care of that and that was our plan, and she trusted me.

In addition, like Lonnie, E.J. identified a non-parental family member as being influential to his academic attainment, his daughter. E.J. spoke about his newborn,

I could say my daughter saved my life. You know why? Because as I said before all those [writing] skills I didn't have and I guess maturity as well, my daughter like brought much more maturity to me and because of that responsibility because I knew I had to take care of my family, I became more focused on my school work. Because I am like, "Look, I have to graduate." I need to stop playing around and stop taking these classes, stop withdrawing stop – stuff like that and really take it more serious. She actually helped me, so yeah. And actually my professor actually said that one time. He's like ever since you became a parent I see a difference in you, you know.

Empirical research suggests that children of two parent households are more likely to attend college and to receive more financial and emotional support than those who do not (Henretta, Wolf, Van Voorhis, & Soldo, 2012). Findings from this study supports previously conducted research and expands the notion of familial support to include the important emotional encouragement and internal motivation Black men receive from their spouses and children. The next section discusses how participants reached out to obtain vital assistance from WSU student services, retention focused initiatives, external resources, professors, and peers while enrolled at WSU.

"I reached out": Social Environmental Level Protective Factors. The protective factors employed by 18 (78.2%) Black college men in this study are social/environmental. Table 11 illustrates the distribution of the subjects among four categories of social /environmental level protective factors that were selected and deployed by participants, including: student services, retention focused initiatives, external resources, professors, and peers. Student service offices are focused on delivering financial or academic assistance to the general student body such as

financial aid, residential services, and tutoring. Retention focused programs work to provide distinct cohorts of students with services that work to enhance persistence and attainment. External resources include services, agencies, and non-familial support groups unaffiliated with the institution. Finally, professors and peers consist of faculty, staff, and enrolled students who have assisted participants, but who are not associated with a University sponsored support service or retention program per se.

Table 11

Number of Participants by Social/ Environmental Level Protective Factor (n = 18)

<u>Social/ Environmental Level Protective Factor Category</u>		
<u>Participants #</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Office/ Program</u>
4	Student Services	Financial Aid, Academic Advisement, Tutoring Center, Residential Life,
7	Retention Focused Initiatives	Veteran's Support Group, TRiO, EOP, ONE Male Mentoring Program, NSLS
4	External Resources	Church Pastor, Family Friends, Access to Health Care
3	Professors & Peers	Staff, Faculty, and/or enrolled students not affiliated with student support or retention based group

Strikingly, the help seeking tendencies of these men substantiates Sheu and Sedlacek's (2004) findings that Black male college students reported higher help-seeking tendencies in regard to "professional help sources" than their Asian and White counterparts (p.135). However,

in addition to the men in this study actively seeking membership or assistance from institutionalized student services and retention based programs--including: the Financial Aid Office, University Tutoring Center, and Academic Advisement--participants sought out grassroots retention/success programs, such as the Student-Veterans' Support Group and the ONE Male Mentoring Program. These men detailed instances of reaching out to professors and peers in addition to obtaining advice on critical academic decisions from external networks.

***“I built a network of peers”*: Impactful Faculty and Peer Network.** Students' peer and faculty relationship development positively impacts achievement and outcomes (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Men in this study identified connecting with key faculty and peers as being decisive to their success. Florence, for example, talked about developing study groups with peers at WSU to assist in his understanding of course material, described below:

Interviewer: You said you reached out to some people?

Florence: Next I reached out to – I built a network of peers, who we would study together. If I didn't understand something, I would bring it to them. How where you getting through? I would go to other professors, ask questions. How could I get through?

Interviewer: So, how do you go about reaching out? How do you initiate the interaction?

Florence: Number one, I started to understand the material a lot more, and then I got different perspectives. Like, what I was good at maybe you're not good at. And what you're good at, maybe I'm not good at. When we come together we get a clearer understanding of the whole picture. Know we've got a bunch of different perspectives and not only that, it gives me the confidence. Then we work together and we're pulling each other up – no longer do I feel like, I have to do this by my self!

Smith also reported tapping into peers. Although his friends were enrolled at other colleges, he contacted them for advice regarding his academic progress at WSU. Smith said,

So I spoke to 3 different people, my cousin, my best friend from Risler and my girlfriend. And based on what they said, I made my own decision, which they really just confirmed,

what I thought to do anyway. But you know, I just needed to hear from like another person, see like either person's perspective. So, yeah in May, I just decided, I registered for the classes in summer. And I said, I'm just going to ride it out and I'm going to graduate.”

Billy and Kareem reported receiving helpful advice and essential encouragement from professors. Billy said,

There's a professor here in, Political Science and he's a very wonderful professor. A remarkable teacher, and he said, “Billy you have to stay here. You have to stay here; you have to finish this because too many Black brothers are dropping out of this school.”

While Kareem credits his mother, a Master's degree recipient, with helping him align his credits and interests to an academic major, he also acknowledges a Black faculty member. He stated, “I felt like just working with her (Dr. Ady) was maybe the most important factor in my final decision of my major.” He said,

I sat down, spoke to Dr. Ady the chairperson and a guidance counselor and they both gave me information, but I felt like the chairperson she was more enthusiastic, she was more understanding; she knew where I was coming from. You know she understood me as a person. She said look, "I'm here to help you," so I just felt like keeping good communication with her would only take me to the next level.”

“At least I have the ONE meeting coming up”: Seeking Out Support Services. While peer and faculty support are critical to Black male success in postsecondary institutions, it is commonly known that Black college men also benefit significantly from institutional student support services, retention, and targeted minority male initiatives (Cuyjet, 2006; Jacobi, 1991; LaVant, Anderson & Tiggs, 1997; Palmer & Wood, 2012a; Robert, 2008). Although support exists, it is often the prerogative of Black male collegians to access critical program services and agents. Steve, who struggled academically, is representative of this phenomenon and he explained his approach as follows:

First I went to tutoring. I found out about it myself – I went around and honestly I – asking for help – I asked the professors. I failed my first two writing assignments here and I asked my professor who actually was my middle school teacher, Mr. Collard. And

he said, "Oh, go to tutoring!" I didn't really know what tutoring was, but I found the [Academic Tutoring] Center and started going to tutoring for writing and math.

Megaman and Bennet both reported being proactive help-seekers; Megaman with locating a place to live after being evicted from his apartment as a result of his legal issues and Bennet after losing a full academic scholarship. Megaman explained,

And so I was like, "Alright, so I'm homeless now." And I went to Mr. Jennison Director of Residential Life. It was his last day. I went into his office. It was a Friday night around 6 or 7 o'clock and he was grabbing his coat to leave and, I said, "I need to talk to you about something." I was like, "I have no place to live. I need a dorm, but I don't have money for it." And he said, "Come see me next week, send me an email, let me know the situation. Come see me next week on Monday I'll be in the Dean's office and we'll work it out." I said, "Alright cool!" Monday morning, he sent me to the Controller's office, set up a payment plan, got a Meningitis shot and my key to the dorm, this all happened all in a day.

Bennet recounted his experience as follows:

Bennet: I decided I wasn't leaving school because of losing my scholarship! I started Goggling and researching every possible way to like get Financial Aid. That Monday, the financial aid office told me to fill out the FAFSA.

Interviewer: So first you Goggled to gather more info about Financial Aid, who did you contact in Financial Aid?

Bennet: Yeah, I actually just called the Financial Aid Office and it was just a few simple questions. And the Counselor was just like, "Yes, fill out the form online and come in ASAP and we'll have you know, we'll have all your information." And once I worked with her, I found out that I was eligible for the maximum financial aid, I was like, "Okay." And I was worried about the loans – at that point I was like loans attack you when you graduate, I haven't even gotten that far yet so let me graduate and worry about that when I get there.

Some participants sought assistance through membership in campus-based retention and minority male support programs. Those Black male participants viewed program components, facilitators, mentors, and peers as reliable protective resources and as instrumental in their degree attainment. Jerry, for example, said, "I did join the Vets Club and I think a lot of veterans, they had this, they wanted to succeed also in terms of their education. They want to succeed, so I got

motivated from that! The biggest things we spoke about at these meetings was about transition back to civilian life, and the bad, you know the depression.” Similarly, Joseph was a member of a TRiO Student Support Service federal, grant-funded initiative designed to improve the retention of first generation, minority students at Weaver State. Joseph reported,

Like Ms. Tina she’s my TRiO counselor. I contact her and she definitely helps me out with scheduling my school, and she helps me out with finding the good professors. So with organizing I would say Jesus and definitely I give Ms. Tina credit!

Nick was a member of WSU’s Educational Opportunity Program, an access, retention, and attainment program similar to TRiO, however, it was state funded. Like Joseph, Nick also reached out to program facilitators for assistance. He stated,

Yeah, It was two people, Jonathan Smithers from EOP and my father. JSmitty [Jonathan Smithers] he helped a lot! I would call him and he did stuff for me. Like I had another mentor before him that I am still cool with, like another father figure in my life, but John was like a constant. Like I had to see John when I came to school. I would talk to him about it. I would talk to my EOP counselor about it [guilt], they would like give me insights on some of their past experiences and it helped a lot. Yeah, EOP helped me a lot.

During their enrollment at WSU, six participants in this study became members of ONE, a grassroots, minority, male retention and empowerment program facilitated by WSU Black and Latino male faculty, staff, and administrators. Two members, Zach and Omolayo, credited the ONE program as being valuable in helping them address the negative social integration issues they experienced. Omolayo talked about how he reached out to, and modeled the behavior of, the facilitators, who served as mentors.

Interviewer: And you reached out to those people [ONE facilitators] and they helped you realize who you were – helped you succeeded in college?

Omolayo: Yeah, definitely, definitely. It made me not feel so alone, because at least I have – you know the ONE meeting coming up. At least I have you know, I would just stop by their offices.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Omolayo: I could go down speak to Mona in the registrars, just like to say hey, she's like, "Hey what's going on?" You know just talking, just talking to elders, talking to people that have been through it, and they are like oracles, like if I'm Neo on the Matrix [laughing]. I have a bunch of different oracles. I'm like, "Man I'm trying to figure something out and I just need, I need to hear something from you."

Interviewer: You soak it up - knowledge?

Omolayo: I got to get that information man, because like nobody has it all figured out and it helps too when you find out like the people you look up to they were trying to figure it out too, so I'm like, "Oh, so it's not a crazy feeling, everybody feels this!" You know?

Zach, on the other hand, reached out to and developed healthier social relationships with peers he had met through ONE. He recalled,

At WSU I found – I could relate with, you know my ONE brothers; I'd call them, "Oh what's going on tonight, are we going to the party. And I was partying a little more responsibly [laughing]. You know I could kind of get a clue from them, when it was time to go home, as opposed to before where I would just, I wanted to stay drink and see all the fights, before I go home. With them it was – things were changed it shifted, I had fun but I didn't overdo it.

Notwithstanding the type of threat at work, nearly two-thirds of study participants opted to employ social-environmental-level protective factors, followed by individual-level protection and finally familial assistance. Collectively, when faced with internal or external barriers to their academic attainment, these men actuated help seeking tendencies targeted at singular or combined protective agents. The findings illustrate that as a Hispanic serving institution, WSU is home to a myriad of institutionalized and grassroots support programs designed to promote student success, and that are seemingly beneficial to Black college men. The next section places the previous discussion of risk and threats into an institutional context as it explores the Hispanic serving institution's impact on the resilience of Black college men.

The Hispanic Serving Institution: Supporting Black Male Resilience

This section expands upon the aforementioned findings on social-environmental level protective factors by examining how Black male collegians described their resilient experiences from an institutional context, specifically, how they navigated the HSI environment. Three prominent themes emerged from this investigation: (a) participants described intimate mentorships with faculty and staff when depicting their interactions with the university, (b) men actively modeled the professional demeanors of successful Black male administrators, faculty, and staff, and (c) The Hispanic serving institution (WSU), via its support programs and cultural agents, was largely regarded by participants as a supportive nurturing milieu. As an HSI, WSU's mission emphasizes access, diversity, and the cultural development of the surrounding community, and it employs faculty and staff experienced in working with and educating a socioeconomically and ethnically diverse population. Essentially, WSU is a mission-driven institution with cultural agents who personify its values and endeavors to support its diverse student body.

During their interviews the subjects generally described the institution as a "supportive," and "caring community." When asked, "Was the University a help or hindrance" to their achievement and attainment, the collective response was overwhelmingly positive. Participants described receiving social and academic guidance from networks of caring administrators, faculty, and staff mentors via multiple campus programs, including: grassroots minority male support initiatives, grant funded student support service programs, and academic departments. Remarkably, participants also revealed that modeling the interpersonal, communication, and professional traits of Black and Latino male faculty and staff members garnered them social capital and helped them navigate the campus.

***“I see her as a mentor...as a close family member”*: Faculty and Staff Success**

Navigators. At WSU, Black male collegians were inspired, directed, and assisted by cultural agents who were invested in their academic success. Faculty and staff members of both genders and ethnicities that were identified as “mentors” did not receive additional compensation for their roles. On the contrary, these individuals proactively extended themselves to students as a resource. Participants reported benefitting immensely from their interactions, characterizing the relationship as familial and a “friendship.” They were appreciative of having a confidante on campus. Kareem, for instance, who struggled early on selecting and gaining acceptance into his major, described his appreciation of the mentorship received from the Education department chairperson:

The Education program is rigorous. I got in and I fell in love with the program and since then I always kept good communication with my chairperson, Dr. Ady, who I tend to call my second mother on campus; we have lunch, we conversate, catch up a lot. She always asks me how I’m doing, how’s work? So she tends to always keep up with me and you know, wants to know, “How are your grades and the classes, how are the teachers?” Just to kind of let me know that she cares and she understands that regardless of anything, she’s behind me 100%, other than my mother. So it feels good to have someone of that stature in the Education department really take you in and want you to graduate. She always says, “You are going to be the first African American male to go through this program and graduate and get your teaching degree.” So she wants that.

Kareem described a nurturing relationship equal to that of a close relative. He explained that, “I see her [Dr. Ady] as a mentor, but like I said as a close family member who understood and knew my growth and development and what I could achieve.” Kareem also understood the relevance of the affiliation in the context of social capital and how to leverage that rapport to navigate his academic major. I asked Kareem, “Did the University help or hinder you?” and his response is highlighted in the following interview passage, which further emphasizes this perspective:

It helped me as far as it goes in the aspect of guidance for my major, and what I need to do – where I needed to go, who I needed to speak with, what resources to use, [it] definitely helped me.

Dissimilar to Kareem’s point of view, Sheak described a close friendship with an accessible Black male staff member who assisted him in alleviating his financial issues as described in the following interview excerpt:

Sheak: I don’t really think the University helped me out of that. I mean I have one good friend in the University and that really helped me out through the process while I was here as well. Yeah, we are good friends, so you know....

Interviewer: Yeah? How did *he* – what did he do?

Sheak: I mean just being there, just listening. You know sometimes it’s not easy; sometimes it’s not even about what can I say to this person. Sometimes this is just about listening; I mean you’d be surprised what listening could do to a person. Sometimes just listening, he was just there, he listened you know. You know anytime I wanted to see him I could see him.

Interviewer: Yeah? Did he guide you through any rough spots in terms of academics – navigating through the college; you know, financial aid?

Sheak: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely he always gave me good advice, he put me on a good friend of his who worked for financial aid, he helped me out tremendously, in terms of letting me know what I can apply for, letting me know what grant I can get, letting me know what discount I can get and stuff like that. So, on his end with that that was a tremendous help that the gentlemen with the financial aid, that was a tremendous help.

Interestingly, the “close friend” Sheak spoke of was the Associate University Registrar, who befriended Sheak after playing basketball at the WSU recreational center where, by Sheak’s account, he frequently offered his assistance to students.

Jerry developed a mentee relationship with a Filipino faculty member and fellow immigrant within his academic major department. Jerry discussed how he routinely sought out and appreciated the advisor’s insight and guidance. He described this interaction and the impact on his educational attainment in the following interview selection:

Jerry: I had an advisor in the sociology department; he was very supportive of what I did in Iraq. So therefore, I mean he didn't support the war but he felt that you know society needed to support veterans more. And he was, he made the extra effort to advise me not only with my academics, but also in terms of life skills.

Interviewer: How so?

Jerry: Well he basically told me, he was basically direct, he told me what to expect. He was one of the reasons why I am in grad school right now. He was like, "Hey! A Bachelor's degree is not enough. You are going to get your Bachelors – there is going to be you know millions of other Americans with the same bachelor's." He told me, "I'm not even going to lie to you it's going to be very competitive for you to get a decent job, and for you to live the life that I am living."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Jerry: Because he had a Ph.D. and he was also, he was Filipino. He was also an immigrant, and he knew that I was an immigrant, so he somewhat knew what I was going through. As an immigrant and also as a veteran and also he understood where I grew up. So he is somewhat, he didn't tell me every step to take. But every time I went to him, he would, "Hey! This is what you have to do. He didn't sugar coat anything."

Much like Sheak, Leo's connection with his mentor flourished from a random meeting during this professor's guest presentation. Leo provided an additional example of cultural agent mentoring at WSU and the impact this had on his resilience and life long development. He stated,

I also wanted to point out, Dr. Aslar – he was like a mentor and just a big help at one point. When I talked to him about that situation with my confidence on a scale from 1 – 10, he played a big role in [helping] that. He's the one that helped me get out of my shell. He's the one that made me get up in front of the room to walk around the class with my head held up high to be sure of myself – to have confidence. So he was one of the influences in my college experience.

Leo added,

I think he [Aslar] helped me to push my drive a little bit stronger especially with that encounter I had with him at the National Society Leadership and Success. He was a special guest that day and just having that one on one discussion with him in front of

class, that's an experience I look at. It happened in 2008 it still has played a huge role in my life.

Participants portrayed their mentoring relationships as impactful and long lasting.

Moreover, the WSU cultural agents were perceived to be caring and supportive of Black men's academic success. Relative to each of these accounts is the level of interaction and time invested. These men describe multiple encounters; for many, consistency was the quintessential ingredient, along with an interest in the student's academic and personal wellbeing. While this section discussed the reciprocal nature of mentoring, the next section discusses how Black men model the success related behaviors of WSU Black male faculty and staff.

***“In 10 years...I could be just like these guys”*: Modeling Successful Black Men.**

Participants discussed how they acquired interpersonal skills and inspiration via modeling the behavior of – and aspiring to attain the level of success experienced by – Black and Latino male facilitators of a minority men's support program. Participants talked about the importance of being able to interact with minority male WSU staff members and to hear their counter narratives of success. Zack, for instance, juxtaposed his negative perception of some of the Black men in his community with the inspirational Black male professionals at WSU. He stated, “It was refreshing, because being from the West End and coming from the high school – just the urban setting, you see a lot of young Black men in their 30s and 40s who were just down and out.”

Zach continued,

But to see these other men [WSU staff] in their 30s and 40s and I could picture myself being like them. You could say, “Wow, like in 10 years, in five years I could be just like these guys.” They came from the same – well around what they would say the same hood that I did. They had the same problems, and look they are married, they have cars, they have wives, they have houses. What's stopping me?

Zach's statement underscores the value of the presence of Black male faculty and staff on college campuses. Many Black male students from impoverished communities, like Zach, lack

sufficient African American male success models. Identifying success models, particularly faculty, and having access to them on college campuses provides Black college men with real time examples of their aspirations (Bridges, 2010; Hébert, 2002; Warde, 2008). The statement that follows, from E.J., supports Zach's appreciation of WSU success models. E.J. stated:

We saw so many successful males that look like us and they were giving back to us. They were telling us things, how to thrive, how to be successful just to bring realization that this [degree attainment] is going to be hard and there's things that we are going to have to overcome. It was good to see other males there that were dealing with the same issues we are dealing with that I was dealing with and then also showed you different faces and different people [administrators] that you would never meet on the normal day on campus.

Like E.J. and Zach, Steve benefitted from informal interactions with Black male success models; however, Steve practiced what Bandura (1977) termed *observational learning*. Theorized as learning that occurs in the absence of intentional training, observational learning can exist alternately to a prescribed relationship. For instance, Steve stated, "I reached out to get mentors. And it was not even like a direct – I didn't say, 'Oh, you want to be my mentor?' It was kind of indirect." He discussed how he watched and modeled himself after successful Black men.

I made sure I stayed around them, you know, asked them questions. You know, and went to ONE and all these places that had more mentors and just watched what they did and watched their demeanors, how they dress, how they talk and figured it out.

Omolayo, a 2009 graduate, held a similar perspective of the Black male staff he observed. He stated,

These guys, the ONE facilitators – this is who makes it in life, so that's who I want to be, like that's who I want to be around, that's how I want to mold myself. And seeing the confidence that the guys have, the professionalism, how they take care of their families, how they just love each other. I'm like, "Yo that's the bond I want to have."

Omolayo concluded, "So [I] had a lot of people man, a lot of people that I admire and I just – I pull from them, I get certain things from them." Omolayo's statements are indicative of the expectations of college attainment that many Black men have. For many of the ONE program

members interviewed in this study, and the general population, these men were the first, accessible examples of successful Black males that they had interacted with directly or from a far.

In this section, the participants gave accounts of the potency of mentorship relationships with WSU cultural agents, and the importance of having access to Black male success models. The ONE male support program was celebrated campus-wide. The facilitators were visible faculty, staff, and WSU administrators who donated their time to develop the program under the auspices of the Provost's office. Unique to this study is the fact that the mentors consisted of males and females of various ethnicities. Albeit one common characteristic existed among them, each relationship formed was viewed by the participants as being based on "caring" about their success.

The next section provides an overview of participants' perceptions of the Hispanic serving institution, and it reveals the distinctive features of the campus and its culture that the participants found the most encouraging.

"I feel like the college... embraced me": The Black Male HSI Experience.

Participants reported being connected to and supported by WSU. Moreover, men described the university as helpful and diverse, and did not report feelings of alienation due to race. Additionally, they attributed their academic success and attainment to the university's targeted assistance programming.

Essentially, given the transformative nature of postsecondary education coupled with the shifting populace of the nation, it is critical that the collegiate experiences of Black men are examined from varied institutional contexts (Allen, 1992; Cuyjet, 2006; Hilton, Wood, & Lewis, 2012; Palmer & Wood, 2012). As mentioned previously, Black male collegians at WSU found

the campus to be nurturing, supportive, and empowering. Some compared and contrasted their experiences at other institutions and discussed the importance of fit and sense of belonging (Hausmann, Schofield & Woods, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008b), while others emphasized the ease of participating in the culture of the institution through engagement activities. Nasir exclaimed, “Sometimes people just got to find a college that fits [them]. Clarion didn’t fit me; you know the college in North Carolina didn’t fit me.” He continued,

But here it’s like I don’t know, I feel like the college hugged me like it embraced me. Even though it’s not a HBCU or something like that – just because you are Black don’t mean a HBCU fits you.

Like Nasir, Zack also compared his experiences at a PWI to his enrollment at WSU. He stated, “When I got here, it was a little different; it was like people were speaking my language a little bit. At Sonoma College, I was never comfortable.” Interestingly, Sonoma College is the second largest, 4-year, public university in the state, and although it is situated less than 15 minutes from the WSU campus, Zach found its environment to be isolating and this limited his college experience. He stated,

Because – let’s be honest there a lot of people that I chose to hang out with were minorities, because that’s just who I clicked with. When I came to WSU, there were many Hispanics who – it’s more of an urban setting with different races, even the white people, we spoke the same language.

Zach touched upon a notable social class characteristic of students at WSU. Over 75 percent of all full time, first time students received some form of financial aid, with 71% receiving Pell grants--the most of any postsecondary institution in the state. Thomas also enjoyed the diversity and inclusion of WSU. He stated, “I found the campus to be a big melting pot.” Lonnie discussed profiting from diverse interactions at WSU, as illustrated in the following interview selection:

Interviewer: Has the university helped you do you think, or has it hindered you?

Lonnie: Yeah, no it helped because it diversified me. Like coming here, having White friends, or seeing those Hispanic individuals everyday and just seeing them like they're like unified, they're like the most unified, not saying that black people aren't unified, but they're like super unified even if you're from different fraternities and all of that.

Interviewer: So the University helped diversify you, that's an interesting aspect.

Lonnie: Helped diversify me, it helped me learn about me for sure and it helped me network because in Cressfield I wasn't networking! The people just told us – at WSU I actually had a conversation it was like we're here in school to network. They were talking about, everybody in your class all races are going to be successful in their own field, so you might as well start building these networks now

For Lonnie, the multicultural student population at WSU allowed for a unique networking and real world experience. The son of African immigrants who came from a predominately Black high school, he did not have the opportunity to interact with various ethnicities and races until he arrived at WSU. While he also spoke about being “competitive” with Latino students, he ultimately understood and embraced the benefit of studying in a culturally diverse environment.

I asked Nick if the university positively or negatively affected his achievement and he proudly exclaimed, “It helped – it helped tremendously, and showed me sacrifice and what grinding [working hard] is really about.” He continued,

Grinding isn't just standing on corner, grinding is making sure that paper gets done, making sure that the homework is done, making sure you study, making sure you get adequate sleep just to pay attention. I told you I consider myself a professional student, like this school helped me so much like to stay in the library all night. Just dealing with different people and knowing how to stay away from certain stuff.

Through his experiences, at WSU Nick was able to translate his street hustle mentality into a productive academic energy that propelled him to success. Nick credited the EOP program for his change in perspective and the development of his interpersonal and academic skills.

Similarly, James credited WSU with providing engagement opportunities. While some Black

college men forgo participating in college-sponsored activities due to racialized campuses, James, who graduated in 2012 with a 3.46 GPA, reported that he benefited from WSU's open and inclusive environment. He stated,

From the in-class learning actually getting a degree and the paperwork and things to the experiences [studying] abroad. Like meeting new people whether it's classmates or actual staff, people you interacted with or some mentoring me to this point in things yeah definitely helped.

Lastly, Omolayo provided a comparison of his educational experiences versus his counterparts at PWIs. Omolayo stated,

So, being here man I loved it, I loved it. When I would hear my friends that were at like predominantly white schools, talk about their experience, I'm like man it's totally different here. You know I got to know each one of my professors, more personally, and yeah to me it's a better learning environment. It's more open and you're not as singled out, you don't feel singled out because of your race, because you're in a sea of like a bunch of different types of people.

This section discussed the impact of the HSI on Black male resilience. The three themes that materialized from participants' accounts provided insight into the uniquely supportive and mission-driven environment of WSU, which aided in the understanding of Black male resilience from this institutional context. The intimate mentorships shared with WSU cultural agents were viewed by the participants as encouraging and vital to their college success. Black men who did not actively engage in a mentor-mentee relationship with WSU cultural agents modeled Black male administrators, faculty, and staff professionalism and paths to success at WSU. These men practiced observational learning; examining and documenting the characteristics of successful Black men. Finally, the Hispanic serving institution, WSU, was celebrated by Black men as a supportive, nurturing environment. Participants reported they comfortably achieved their academic goals and actively engaged in the campus culture via the university's support programs.

While the WSU is home to a healthy, formalized, and homegrown network of student support services, cultural agents, and a diverse community, some Black men have had marginalized experiences with peers and faculty members in relation to race, class, and/or gender; similar to their PWI, HSI and HBCU counterparts (Harper & Gasman, 2008; Reddick, Heilig & Valdez, 2012; Strayhorn & Scott, 2012; Williamson, 2010).

Resilience Within the Context of Critical Race Theory (CRT)

This study utilizes CRT as a theoretical framework to analyze the racialized experiences of Black male collegians. Critical race theorists contend that in order to glean a holistic account of their experiences of people of color, studies must include an examination of how social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or socioeconomic status intersect (Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In this section, I examined how participants made meaning of being Black and male, and how they identified with a particular class and/or sexual orientation, and how those identities converged to impact their academic achievement and self-perception relative to their attainment. I also presented findings of how participants' academic challenges and triumphs encouraged them to share their process of resilience with other, particularly, but not exclusively, Black college men. Finally, this section presented participants' counter-narratives in which they revealed their experiential knowledge of the path to academic success, and explained how they attained it.

***“Being a black man in college, you got a lot to prove”*: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Social Class.**

Eighteen out of 23 (78.2%) participants acknowledged that the intersectionality of race, gender/sexual orientation, and/or class complicated their academic resilience at Weaver State University, causing self-doubt, anger, and shame. By their accounts, they felt marginalized enduring microaggressive and blatantly racist and gendered outbursts, such as, “How did you get here, athletic scholarship?” that intersected their social class and gender. Being Black men made many participants ($n = 13$) face direct racialized encounters and/or the personal burden born of social stigma, causing them to feel the need to “prove” themselves worthy of a college education. One participant explained, “It’s the perception that people have of you. You know being a Black man.” The weight of negative expectations based upon gender and race was a significant hurdle for participants.

***“I think being a black man the expectation is mostly negative”*: The Intersection of Race & Gender.**

According to Howard (2008), the educational “disenfranchisement” of Black men is pervasive,

The race and gender nexus is important because individuals wear multiple identities that are typically shaped by both race and gender in all of their manifestations. More importantly, the social construction of these identities plays out in unique ways that have critical implications for racial and gender minorities, in particular for African American males. (Howard, 2008, p. 966)

As Howard (2008) posited, the junction of race and gender for Black men is frequently wrought with negative implications that reverberate throughout various facets of society,

including education. As such, the intersection of being Black and male is accompanied by adverse educational experiences and outcomes that are unique to the population and seldom experienced by their female or same sex counterparts, if at all. For participants in this study, the intersection of race and gender was “lonely” and “shameful.” Their experiences with overt, furtive, and at times internalized discrimination posed additional psychological burdens.

Omolayo described his experience being labeled a *thug* by a professor as follows:

One time, when I came to class Professor Dubois [White professor] was subbing for Dr. Belcher when I came in to the room he said, "Oh no you've got thugs in British Literature." He said that to me as I walked into the room! And I'm thinking about pounding him out. But, I sit down, I do my work and he's like, "Things changed, now you even got guys like him in class, where are you from, how did you get here, athletic scholarship?" And I'm just like - I'm taking it, I'm trying to figure it out, I was like, "Yo man, what's your name man, what's your name?" I was just like, "Yo, just give me the work for the day and I'm out." . . . I left the class and spoke to Mr. Jenkinson, he told me to choose my battles, write a grievance up. I did that; he had a little apology, we had a meeting about it, but he still has his job and he's probably still saying stuff like that to other people.

Omolayo literally fought by taking action in the form of an official grievance against the professor, whose comments were undoubtedly discriminatory. Although Omolayo's racialized and gendered experience was decisive, the subtlety of microaggression complicates the understanding and ability to combat or defend against such situations. The following interview excerpt with E.J. reveals how black men attempt to interpret microaggression.

Interviewer: Did you have to deal with any racism on campus, or what you might have perceived as being racism or gender bias or anything like that while you are here?

E.J: I can't say – I could say subtle...

Interviewer: Yeah?

E.J: I can say very subtle, because you can – like for example I can see in class, like certain students, African – maybe an African American male student might make a comment, it might come out not scholarly or academic (pause)...

Interviewer: Right?

E.J.: Right, correct. And the professor will make a subtle comment, very [subtle] – and you can take it either way. You can take it as racism, you can take it as, you need to work – you know, so I can say I've seen that a couple of times.

Interviewer: But nothing towards you, per se?

E.J.: No, nothing towards me, no.

Omolayo and E.J.'s comments demonstrate variations in responses to overt racialism. The following interview passage illustrates another student's approach to dealing with what he perceived to be a microaggression facilitated by a Black, female professor:

Florence: So my very first class that I took was a little bit overwhelming, coming in and hearing the professor who was an African – American professor, I must say, go on and on about – and would favor the Filipino students, there were only a handful of African-Americans students. And this is a very accelerated course.

Interviewer: Favored them how?

Florence: She'd say, "All these [Filipinos] are my bright ones", and, "You Filipinos you guys are all about education, you guys are..." this, and that. Unannounced to myself she belonged to a Filipino organization and all this other kind of stuff, it kind of made sense after the fact. Being in that setting I felt like well damn I'm already behind the eight ball because here I have this professor and not even that she's African-American but that she's a professor, she's paying more attention to these students, she's answering the questions of these students, she's making herself available to these students; but here I am, I have questions, I don't get it.

Florence successfully navigated this situation by developing a network of faculty and peers within this highly competitive academic department who provided supplemental instruction and study group formation. He discussed how he had to resist similar occurrences to achieve his goals in college. He stated,

I've always had to fight for it. I've always had to work harder in college to get it. You know what I mean? I was in my 20s with locks, dark skin and I was a critical care nurse. I

remember this woman, this African-American woman telling me that, "You're never going to get a job looking like that. Nobody's going to hire you with those things in your hair."

Being both Black and male beleaguered the college experiences of many participants due to the need to constantly fight, defend, and prove they belonged in college. Like Steve, some students started developing a defensive posture while attending WSU as a result of their experiences with microaggressions. Men elected to become academically assertive and focused, rejecting marginalization by refusing to be sidelined. This stance positively motivated them to achieve academically. Steve shared the following story:

The one thing that really made me change, that really made me want to get a degree was my remedial math class. I went to go get my test from the teacher, everybody's tests was all over her desk. And I went to grab my test and I had 100 and I went to grab it and she said, "That's not your test." She didn't look at the name! She just assumed it was not my test. And from that standpoint on I was like, "Nobody is going to judge me because of how I dress and talk, and think that I'm not smart because I'm a Black male."

Participants in this section were confronted with managing instances of racialized and gendered experiences that posed additional obstacles to decipher, maneuver, and expend indispensable psychic energy.

"You got a lot to prove, you got the whole race on your back": The Burden of Proof. While Jerry and Smith did not recall negotiating overt racism or microaggression; however, they addressed the need, as Black men, to prove their worthiness as college students. For these men, the internalization of negative stereotypes was significant, for instance Jerry said:

I learned you know I'm not sure what point I learned it is that there's a lot of things that we say we can't do because so many people before us said it [college] wasn't for people like myself, as an African American man. And basically, I had to prove to myself that this was wrong. This thought process was wrong. I had to prove it to other people, my younger siblings. And I told myself that it was never really about you know getting the college degree and making a lot of money. It was about progressing in the society that usually – usually think the worst of you know, Black men.

Smith echoed similar sentiments:

Definitely for me, being a Black man in college, you got a lot to prove, you got the whole race on your back, whenever you go places. If you don't represent it right, you know that just proves that somebody else is right instead of proving them wrong.

These participants spoke of the self-inflicted or socio-inflicted burden of the intersection of race and gender. This conflict precipitated the prove them wrong coping mechanism; similar to the past research conducted by Moore et al. (2003). Interestingly, these WSU men's strong desire to prove themselves was not a product of suffering microaggressions or unmasked gendered racial encounters; rather, it was a direct result of being sensitized to the absurdly negative majoritarian view of Black men. In the following interview excerpt, Sheak's comments expand on the detriment of perceived marginalization of Black men as a result of structural racism in American society.

Sheak: I think the skin color does play a part. I feel like as a Black man you have to work twice as hard and you have to prove twice as much.

Interviewer: Really, you see that in the classroom?

Sheak: Yeah absolutely, you've got to prove that you're twice as smart as somebody you know.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Sheak: It's only because, it's the perception that people have of you. You know being a Black man, sometimes when you were in school you experienced a lot of structural racism. You know, does structural racism still exist? I think it does. So you know all that plays a part, with the way an individual evolves as well as a person's psyche, all that plays a part I believe.

Interviewer: Yeah. So when you step into the classroom, do you carry that with you? When you see a White or Asian professor, a non-black professor are you conscious of your ethnicity and of your gender? Because I don't know if, you know Black women have a higher graduation rate than Black men – so what's the issue?

Sheak: Yes and no. The thing that I do realize when I step into the classroom is, I realize that there is a complete disconnect between me and the professor,

you know like the professor has a complete disconnect in terms of him being able to relate, in certain situations. You sense that. It used to be that the teacher made the student feel comfortable, but I think as Black men and the education system, at times the roles are reversed to where we have to make the professor feel comfortable with being able to teach us, he's naturally not comfortable because of his perception of who we are.

Interviewer: That's been your experience? You've tried to make the professors comfortable?

Sheak: Yes that's been my experience. Yeah, yeah yes! You have to make them feel comfortable in terms of asking intellectual questions, because you feel that they respect knowledge. You feel like you have to smile more than usual. You know I have to get along more than I usual – I got to make him feel comfortable. I feel like that plenty of times, when actually he's supposed to make you feel comfortable.

Sheak's account of the impact of structural racism on the psyche of Black men is poignant. It is indeed difficult for Black men to negate their psychologically defensive postures when they are consistently besieged and fending off pervasive negative stereotypes to avoid complete nihilism. Some participants held the idea that their experiences as Black men juxtaposed with those of a White professor are so irreconcilable that they warrant comforting faculty. This is indeed distressing. It is important for faculty to become competent in building a culturally and racially inclusive classroom environment particularly for Black men. As Leo said,

Well, one of my earliest experiences that I can think of is coming to WSU my freshman year. In media arts class, I remember I was the only Black guy. Most of the media arts class, there was a lot of Hispanic and White people, I felt left out at times. I think that was partly bringing my confidence down a little bit; it made me uncomfortable because I didn't know how to respond to feeling so alone. I was trying to see if I could find more people that looked like me so I could relate more, so that was a little tough at first.

In summary, this section discussed how race and gender interplay to shape Black male collegians' academic experiences (particularly in classroom settings). Some participants' encountered racism and gender bias firsthand at WSU, while others experienced reductions in their self-worth due to the unfavorable perceptions of Black college men. Participants attempted

to counter majoritarian views of their racial and gender group and to dismantle internalized academic and social insecurities throughout their college years.

Navigating Social Disorder and Resource-Deficient Communities

Jackman and Jackman (1983) proposed that, “class status in the United States consists of a continuum based on criteria such as income, educational attainment, lifestyle, values, and beliefs, as well as how people perceive similarities and differences among groups” (p. 4). In an earlier section of this chapter, *Financial Barriers to College Completion*, I examined participants’ encounters with financial hardship using an isolated facet of Jackman and Jackman’s (1983) class continuum--finances. An investigation of these men’s financial obstacles illustrates a singular feature of the intersection of class and race. However, this approach excludes other meaningful variables that assist in providing a comprehensive understanding of how the types of environments they originate from – and their experiences within those domains – impact their achievement and attainment. In this section, participants revealed their confrontations with what Massey (2006) has called exposure to social disorders including homelessness, illegal drug use/distribution, crime, violence, and resource-deficient schools, and they also described how the intersection of social class and race influenced their college persistence.

African Americans have occupied a considerably underprivileged social class status (Bell, 1979; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012; Garibaldi, 2007; Harper, 2009a; Jenkins, 2006; Kunjufu, 2001; Noguera, 2003). Many of the men in this study came from similarly disadvantaged social backgrounds, including single family, low-income, households with the highest level of education achieved by nearly 70% of mothers being a high school diploma or less.

Scholars have argued that it is imperative that the experiences of marginalized people are examined at the intersections of their multiple identities such as race, gender, and social class, as their “simultaneous memberships influence perceptions and actions” (Bell, 1979; Bonner, 2010, 2012; Grant & Sleeter, 1986, p. 196; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This contention is especially salient in the social and economic development of Black people (significantly for Black men) in the United States who have been largely afflicted due to race and class (Grant & Sleeter, 1986). The experiences of Black men within the nexus of race and class have left them exposed to Massey’s (2006) social disorders, which in turn infiltrates their educational setting affecting their attainment. Within the context of critical race theory, 15 (65.2%) participants discussed their experiences with the intercentricity of race and social class while enrolled at WSU.

***“He tried to pull the trigger, but it jammed”*: Experiencing Drugs and Violence.** Eight (34.7%) participants recalled episodes of being exposed to drugs and or violence in their neighborhoods during the college years. Some men shared terrifying memories of being victims of violent crimes while others recalled shameful episodes of dealing in or being affected by illegal narcotics. For a few men, drugs and violence were ingrained in their social milieu; negatively altering their decision-making abilities, overall safety, and esteem. Nick, for example, recalled the enticement of dealing drugs his freshman year as he prepared to leave campus for summer break.

It happened towards the end of the summer program. I knew it was coming to a close and you have like a week and a half left and you start thinking, I am going to miss all this free food. I got to go back home and make some magic happen [illegal activity], so I can feed myself and I got to make sure that I have money. I’m not going to lie to you the biggest priority that I had during the summertime was not going to jail.

Nick was clearly dealing with the conflicts of straddling two very separate worlds. I continued to ask him, “Did you feel like you were getting pulled back to the ‘hood’, *they* were trying to pull you back?” He replied,

I felt like the money [drug money] was pulling me back, because obviously like I was so broke, it makes no sense! During the summer [bridge] program I used to look forward to lunch time and save it to eat late at night – I was so hungry. The money was the only thing that made me really feel that type of way. I was always stressed out about that – everyday!

While Nick was enjoying his immersion into academe, he considered reentering the drug dealing sub-culture he had desperately battled to escape, struggling to reconcile the two worlds. Unlike Nick, Bennet feared that individuals in his new college environment might find out his shameful drug related past.

Freshman year at WSU it was more like, "Oh, everyone might know my dad is a drug dealer, and was in prison so let me try to mask what he is. Let me try to hide where I'm from." I tried to make it sound better.

Bennett spoke about the need to “mask” that facet of his personal history during a time in his life when he should be discovering and accepting who he is and his past experiences. Smith also revealed his experiences living in a predominately Black, drug infested, housing development. Smith was selected for financial aid verification but never received the notices instructing him to submit the requested documents, and this resulted in a loss of aid and a tuition balance that he could not settle. Smith explained the situation as follows:

So they sent mail to my home, and the mail was never received by me or anybody living at home, because the drug dealers always stash drugs in the mailboxes. And they take your mail and everything and this was not a good way to communicate. So I used to always tell the University to send my mail to my grandmother's house, because she lived in an actual home and it's a little more secure.

The existence of poverty in many communities is undoubtedly a precursor to crime; in some instances drugs and in other cases violence. Five (21.7%) men in this study reported being

robbed at gunpoint during their college years, and, as a result, some college men started illegally carrying guns for protection. Megaman, for instance, recalled, “I go up to the ATM late at night by myself, while I’m leaving a dude comes up to me and puts a gun in my mouth and he’s like, ‘Give me your money!’ I’m like, ‘Go ahead yo, take it!’” He added,

And so after that I really just stayed in the house. You know I started carrying a gun after that. I found a gun from one my unscrupulous friends. I started carrying it around with me all the time. I was, I was shaken up. You know I never been robbed, mugged, or shot at before. So I’d been like cooling until like dude put a gun in my mouth and took something from me you know, so I started carrying a gun, stopped going to class.

In the interview passage below, Steve shared a life threatening experience that took place in his neighborhood while he was attending college:

Interviewer: How did you almost lose your life, what was that about?

Steve: Being at the wrong place at the wrong time and I got robbed. I was trying to talk to the guy instead of just not talking. He tried to pull the trigger but it jammed, and then a second time he just got frustrated and then a car came down the street and he ran off. But for years, I never talked about it because again it goes back to the ego thing and feeling like as a Black man – I almost felt like, if I brought it up to people they’ll be like, “Me too, that’s normal in the hood.” Like it was initiation!

Interviewer: How old were you when this happened?

Steve: I was 20.

Interviewer: 20 years old? So you were a college student? What did that do to you in school, were you constantly watching your back, psychologically?

Steve: That was like my worst semester here, and I still had a 3.0! But for about two years I was very paranoid for a long time, I was always thinking that people were out to get me and all types of thoughts ran through my head, I had a bad time sleeping for a couple of years but after a while I kind of got over it.

Black men discussed the physical endangerment and psychological anxiety that resulted from living in their impoverished communities that were characterized by gun violence and drug infestation. These men were vulnerable to the life threatening social disorders of their

neighborhood environments.

“We do not have certain resources that other students have...”: Resource Deficiency.

Black men perceived their resource-stricken, Black communities as contributing to their under-preparation for college success. The demographic overview of participants presented in chapter 4 places in context their social conditions and resource availability. Seven (30.4%) men shared that their economic and educational disparities rendered them ill prepared for the rigors of college level work and socialization at WSU; specifically, these men reported possessing marginal social capital. Yates (2013) contended that possessing and properly utilizing social capital was vital in the college preparedness of Black high school students. Yet the lack of resources, particularly supportive family, friends, teachers, and external agents, limited the potency of their efforts. In the same vein, participants in the current study described pre-college experiences, such as lack of support, contact with other Black male college trailblazers, failing schools, and standardized testing, as troublesome to college persistence. A few participants were so self-doubting about their academic preparation and knowledge of college that they entered WSU believing that they would not attain a degree. During his interview, E.J. noted that he absolutely believed his academic struggles were a result of failing schools in his community. He stated,

Well, to be honest I mean I am a Criminal Justice Major so that is – race and social class are the things that I constantly think of, and I can definitely say yes. Because, for my issue [remedial writing] – we are under privileged, we do not have certain resources that other students have or, other kids that do not live in urban communities.

In addition to low performing high schools, E.J. noted that the lack of encouragement and support for pursuing a postsecondary education was one of the most damaging aspects of underprivileged communities. Nick, for example, spoke about the lack of support that the few college goers in his neighborhood received, and how they were perceived impacted his impression of college. He stated,

I don't know, college wasn't like a care, like I never thought it was going to happen, ever. Seriously even my friends that went to college, this is crazy – this is sad and this shows you how bad the Black community is, but they were kind of looked at as *outcasts* sometimes because they went to college. . . So I am like, no, I'm not going to go to no school [college]; "I'm on the Block," that was my mentality.

Likewise, James talked about insufficient college planning assistance throughout high school. He recalled, "One of the things I remember in high school, my guidance counselor wasn't really active when it came to college. For me college didn't come into play till probably the last six months of my senior year!" As a result, James reported that he missed college application deadlines. Although he eventually enrolled at a community college and transferred to WSU, due to the lack of preparation at both the 2-year college and high school levels, he found himself "lost" at WSU. He stated,

First year was interesting. A bit nerve wrecking like coming to school, this is my first experience of college. I heard about college life, but I didn't know what to expect. They are just things I've heard of them through TV and shows and things like that, so it was interesting experience, my first year first semester.

Jerry and his family gained access in to the United States through political asylum. His family moved from Haiti to one of the most impoverished cities in the state, and he received limited financial assistance based on their asylum status. Jerry expressed his experiences with resource deficiency as follows:

Interviewer: Yeah what do you mean better than your environment, what exactly?

Jerry: What I mean? I noticed and started to understand how the American society works. And I noticed that there were people who – everyone wasn't living like us [poverty], and like some of my classmates. I understood that on television there's a lot of fantasy, but I started to go out of my environment sometimes. I was able to meet different people from church who were living better lives than ours, and were going to better schools. And you know their main focus was education, what they're going to do after high school, what degree, talking about degrees, talking about different colleges.

Interviewer: Right.

Jerry: Talking about different job prospects. So I started to become intrigued, but I really did not invest my time into getting the information and learning how to apply to them – I just didn't know how. Because you know these – some of the resources that these individuals had, I didn't. It wasn't available you know in my environment, so I wasn't really ready for this [college].

Steve, who struggled with remediation in college, talked about his experiences with standardized testing; a universally controversial social class variable discussed in higher education circles.

Steve stated,

Interviewer: So what was your mindset prior to coming to college?

Steve: My mindset coming to college was – I honestly, I didn't think I was going to graduate. I thought I was going to come in, get a year or two done, then start going part time, and get a full time job. I didn't really see myself graduating until like after my first two semesters, it was very intimidating honestly.

Interviewer: Really, why?

Steve: I was just so caught up in this whole SAT thing! I didn't have good standardized test scores. SATs indicated how successful you will be in college, so that's what I always thought. I didn't know anybody or I didn't have any counselors or principals come in and say, "Oh I didn't do well on SATs, and I still graduated from college." I never heard that kind of comeback story from anybody, so I kind of felt defeated and was just like well, I'll just try to get by and if I get by, I'll graduate.

I asked Steve, an MBA recipient, to share his perspective on the impact of his social class and race on his standardized test scores. He added,

I think it's a biased test, honestly. I think they are all biased tests because if you are raised in different social class situations around different things, you have a different way of thinking. That's just my opinion. You know and one way you are being taught to take a test could be another different way at another better school. I just don't think that it's an even playing field. Not that I have a solution of what should be a test that should be taken but I just don't feel like the test is fair.

Social disorders in the environments of the Black men in this study were certainly related to class status and race. As a result of community environments that encouraged narcotics sales,

violent crimes, and failing schools, these men had limited social capital and failed to prepare for college. In fact, bouts with violence and social capital deficiencies left some emotionally traumatized; with shattered self-esteem by the time they attended their first class at WSU. The next section explores how Black male collegians bundled their experiences with risk, protective factors, and the intersectionality of race, gender, and class to educate same-race and same-gender peers about persisting at WSU.

Sharing Experiential Knowledge: A Form of Social Justice

This section explores the collegiate experiences of participants from the perspective of the CRT tenet, Commitment to social justice. This tenet asserts that CRT is an analytical instrument that can be utilized to jettison injustice and provide marginalized groups with a form of resistance (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In recent research, Harper (2013) defined *peer pedagogies* as a methodology utilized by Black students at PWIs to teach other Black students how to develop support networks and navigate racialized campuses.

Participants in this study were asked if and how they shared their resilience experiences with other Black men or students at WSU as a means to empower and edify them to the various pitfalls and footholds, so as to ultimately assist in their educational attainment. Seventeen (73.9%) participants reported imparting narratives of their academic and social struggles and triumphs to aid other Black male students with reaching their academic goals. They acknowledged purposefully connecting Black men to supportive social networks and educating them on what to expect at WSU. Interestingly, six (26.0%) men described unfavorable encounters in their attempts to teach peers their success strategies. These men discussed facing

resistance or simply being ignored by other Black men and spoke about the difficulties of divulging “shameful” personal information, such as fearing alienation and/or ridicule.

***“Listen this is what you got to do”*: Providing Guidance.** In earlier sections of this chapter, I wrote about how men discussed the social environmental protective factors that attributed to their college success. Black men received academic assistance, advice, and encouragement from peers. Participants also considered the sharing of their experiential knowledge important, useful, and as a personal obligation. Megaman, for instance, stated that he “absolutely” shared his experiences with other Black male collegians. He, in fact, provided them with detailed information about being responsible for the “business” aspect (financial aid, keeping abreast of changes to degree requirements, etc.) of college and the importance of networking.

I always tell people, "Listen this is what you got to do. Do not go in that office and let them tell you anything. Know your business. Know your credits, grades, and GPA. Know what you need to do in order to say, 'no, that's not right,' because they'll lie to you. They will lie in your face and tell you no, you didn't get no financial aid." I'll tell them how I did this and then I'll walk them through every step it took me to do exactly what I did if not better. I've introduced people to Armani and other people. Get to know this person because these are the people that helped me get through certain levels of my college experience.

Like Megaman, E.J. found that empowering people was part of his personal obligation. He stated,

I can tell you one thing, that's one of my missions like, to share it, to share whatever knowledge I have with anyone. Not just my peers, not just people I associate with, not just the Black males, Hispanic males, to anyone that I deem that knowledge needs to be shared with. As a matter of fact I was having this conversation with someone else, I said, “Man I wish I knew that in undergrad, I wish I would have started taking my internships sophomore year, I wish I would have did it this way, I wouldn't be in the jam I am in right now,” so that's what I continuously do, share that with my peers.

A number of men noted that the support programs that assisted them early in their academic careers later provided them with an outlet to share their stories with newly enrolled freshmen

members. James, for example, an EOP graduate, became a summer counselor and he explained how he encouraged the younger members as follows:

Not to the extent I just did now, but yeah I try to [share experiences]. Like working with the EOP program during this past summer here. One of the things Mr. Zander did was assign me a few students. A couple of males, four of them were Black males. I tried to help them by telling them my story, a bit of my story I was like, "I am Black [male] and just stumbled into college, walked in not even sure what to expect. And it took some time but I figured it out, I think I – I worked hard to find who I wanted to be through those four years". And I try to tell them that story just to help them and welcome any questions, and welcome them to share their stories, something like that but not actually go in there for to tell my story.

For others, sharing stories became a very personal endeavor; similar to what James alluded to in the interview excerpt above and for Veinte, who suffered from a neurological disorder, narcolepsy, who said,

When I do have the opportunity, I try to share my experiences with them [Black men]. Being that you know, they might have their issues too; you know whether it's mental, the environment, or the social aspect of college, or whatever it is. They might have their health issues too and they might need to know what should they be looking forward to or what tools they need in order to get to where they want to be. But, like I said, if I do have the opportunity, I always will be able to share.

Jerry's response to the question speaks to the social justice component of CRT and the significance of providing conduits for the stories and experiential knowledge of marginalized individuals to be shared. The following interview passage illustrates this point:

Interviewer: You mentioned that you liked to help people. Actually what I would like to know is, do you share your experiences?

Jerry: Yes definitely.

Interviewer: With other Black man, you can tell them that this would --

Jerry: Well, that's one of the reasons why I am here. Because you sent me a great email, you know what, one day I might want to get my Ph.D. You know I might want to write my dissertation regarding similar cases. And me coming here, that's another way of helping, so people could maybe understand my experiences. And understand my attitude and how I have given up, maybe that can motivate somebody. And I like to help people

by being honest with them. I tell them it's an ugly world out there, but you can make it. Somehow, somehow you can make it with the right mindset; with a positive mindset, you can make it!

How did participants seek to empower and educate other Black male undergraduates while encountering perils and safeguards at WSU? These men served as agents of social change and justice, revealing experiential knowledge as a vital component to overcoming majoritarian views and negative stereotypes that are unfortunately adopted by some Black men. While many participants were successful in sharing their stories, some were frustrated by their attempts to educate other Black men about college life.

***“They kind of don't want to hear that, I don't know why”*: Being Met With Resistance.**

While many participants were successful in sharing their stories and their audiences were receptive to those efforts, some faced frustrating challenges in attempting to educate Black male undergraduates about college life. Six participants reported experiencing difficulties offering guidance to other Black men at WSU. Some spoke about not being able to connect with their Black peers, and other men wrestled with internalized issues of shame, fear of alienation, and disclosure of personal struggles. I asked Smith if he was comfortable talking about his collegiate experiences with other Black men and he replied,

You know what, this is kind of weird, I have one friend, male, he is Black. And he didn't graduate from college, he went to college, but he didn't graduate. And, it was many times I would tell him like, "Listen you need to apply to WSU, just come here, get your degree." I kind of felt like talking to another Black man about college and all those roadblocks and being persistent, they kind of don't want to hear that. I really can't put my finger on why. But I don't know if it's a macho thing. And you want to keep that intact, but it's definitely something there, you know for the Black men.

As illustrated in Smith's remark, the overtones of frustration and confusion were not uncommon as he attempted to reconcile the rejection of his attempt to encourage his Black male friend to

complete his education. Nick did not mind serving as an ambassador to other Black college men at WSU.

Interviewer: Do you share you experience with underclassmen or other upperclassmen now, so do you share with entering freshman?

Nick Braine: No

Interviewer: Tell them how to progress through situations?

Nick Braine: Not really. I don't really know too many of them, I only stay on campus sometimes, and I don't really be here that long anymore. I used to be at the library all night. I don't do that, like my study habits changed, so I didn't really have a chance to interact with them that much. Like one of my old best friends, his little brother goes here, I drop a jewel in his ear when I can but other than that it was just too much going on.

Nick went on to say, "I try to give back as much as I can," in regard to working with the College Bound program and his experiences with the program's high school participants. However, his comments demonstrated his frustration with his unsuccessful attempts at reaching out to other Black college men. He added,

We all [Black men] need to talk, and a lot of times when you would be trying to talk to people you start to just think you are talking to the air. So I like to keep it to myself or give it up when it is supposed to be given.

Joseph also felt frustrated when asked if he gave advice to other Black men. Joseph stated,

I try my best to do it but particularly. Yes I try, and particularly with Black males it's really hard. For one, they are all on campus, but they have that mentality from high school. They're in college they are still like, 'yo, what's up nigga,' all that stuff, excuse my language. But you know it's like I can't talk to someone like that because they have a closed mind. So it's like I see Black people in college but yet they are still of the ignorant level from out in the hood.

Joseph talked at length about not being able to connect with other Black men who he found to be "ghetto," and not receptive to his advice.

Thomas and Urban felt frustrated with themselves for being unable to reach out to others by sharing their stories of overcoming hardship. Thomas talked about missing the opportunity to share his experiences being a Black, gay, HIV positive, college man. Thomas stated,

People on campus knew that I was gay. I mean I didn't tell anybody about my health status in a sense. It's funny because I was in a Community Health class and the talk of HIV/AIDS always came up and it was always interesting to hear what people thought about the situation. And then I had to remind myself sometimes that these guys are a little bit younger than me so they don't always know the real issues because some of the stuff that came out of that class was very ignorant.

Thomas added that he yearned to tell his classmates, "I'm right here and I've been here since 1988 and I'm still going strong!" He felt that his comments would have been, "Kind of like a motivational story or just like an eye opener" perhaps for other individuals infected with the virus.

Urban expressed that he felt ashamed to share his story with others. Reflecting on the missed opportunities to serve as a source of information for other Black men, he stated,

Interviewer: Do you share your experiences with other Black men?

Urban: Not often, and I think that often, I don't have the formal platform to do so, not because there is a lack of desire. And I think also shame was another thing.

Interviewer: Really?

Urban: Shame in the sense that initially, that it was – why did it take me this long? Why did I do it this way, and a lot of initial decisions? I focused on all of those negative things.

Urban emotionally disclosed the innate embarrassment of his collegiate struggles; from losing his scholarship to taking a decade to attain his bachelorette degree. He stated,

The shame was just too much. I thought like, 'I just can't do this,' you know like, not that I can't do it in the sense of finishing but it was just – I felt embarrassed to share it like to say it, to own it.

As Urban mentioned, his focus on the negative aspects of his collegiate experience paralyzed him from sharing his incredible story of resolve, up until the moment of his interview.

In this section, participants discussed imparting their personal stories, advice, and forewarnings to groups, individuals, and members of university support programs, regardless of race or gender. Their accounts highlighted a theme of opportunity. Many of the men noted the need for more channels, perhaps formal settings, to share and teach others, emphasizing the need for mediums whereby counter narratives could be communicated in an effort to uplift both storyteller and audience.

Surprisingly, Black men faced internal shame and fear of ridicule that limited their conveying of their success. In addition to the external resistance from other Black men who simply did not want to listen. A few participants were ashamed of the shortcomings and conditions that threatened their success and others were disappointed in their unreceptive macho counterparts. Harris and Harper (2008) found that some men acquired a misguided view of masculinity as a result of socialization, which limited their interpersonal relationship building skills. Help seeking is often associated with femininity, and this could explain why some Black college men would be unreceptive to help, advice, and ill equipped to seek help.

This Is How We Did It: Black Male Counter Narratives

Using the CRT tenet counter narratives as a vehicle for marginalized Black men to reject majoritarian views and stereotypes, participants in this study provided insightful chronicles that explained their academic resilience, persistence, and educational attainment.

Early in the interview protocol men were asked to provide episodic accounts of their lived collegiate experiences in the context of threats and protective factors. Toward the conclusion of their respective interviews, participants were invited to define their overall academic resilience

by addressing the question, “How did you do it?” The intent of this question was twofold: (a) to gain better understanding of men’s perspective of what fueled their global collegiate attainment, and (b) to provide them with the opportunity to share their experiential knowledge of resilience, persistence, and achievement. While all participants responded to the inquiry, some initially stated quizzically, “I don’t know,” before arriving at an answer. Many said they had “never thought about it;” conversely, others responded emphatically. Responses ranged from identifying their faith in God as a factor, learning from mistakes, wanting more (upward social mobility), and building a personal legacy. Overall, men related their accomplishments to two prominent factors: (a) an unwavering self-determination to attain a degree, and (b) supportive networks.

“It sounds so cliché, but determination that’s it...”: Determined to Succeed.

The men in this study struggled during their first years at WSU. After navigating those early obstacles, participants’ self-efficacy helped them to commit to college completion. When asked how they did it, some participants cited their staunch self-determination to persist and complete their degree requirements, and how they deemed it “valuable.” They highlighted how their hard work and persistence through tough times were fueled by a desire to achieve a better life, and the satisfaction of finishing what was not easy to begin with. The following interview excerpt illustrates this point:

Interviewer: How did you make it? If someone were to ask you to answer that one question about how you made it through college what would you tell them?

Bennet: It sounds so cliché, but determination that’s it like there’s no other way! I mean I could say between God’s mercy and my determination, that’s it. Like you have to want it, and if you want you got to go get it. That’s, it just sounds so simple it isn’t, but I couldn’t be like yeah it just stumbled upon me into my lap because I worked for it.

As a Haitian immigrant, James credited his mother for instilling in him a strong work ethic.

That's a good question. I will say probably is definitely part of it is my upbringing from there is mama is no weak woman. Like I'm telling you the things she done she's not a weak woman. So I got that from part of it is definitely from my mother, the rest is just this drive and determination, especially like not giving an option to quit.

James also emphasized the "value" of working hard to achieve academic and career goals.

I want to say the thing that differentiates me from the rest was because at that time getting my bachelors was the only option for me, and just having that in mind. It was just there was nothing else to do like backing out and do what? Quitting was just never an option; I was just like, "Just make it through!" I had like tunnel vision on the finish line and that was it. And when you really want something that's valuable you'll take on anything, do anything.

Like James, other students, including Nick and Megaman, discussed the importance of having strong work ethics. For these students, self-determination was the key to resolving financial issues and redefining academic focus. For instance, Nick stated, "I had faith in myself...I just pushed myself – just pushed myself." The following remark by Megaman further illustrates this point:

Focus and determination. Just having a clear goal in mind, if nothing else graduation was the goal. Graduation was the goal and everything else was – and I worked hard, I was determined. I worked so hard. I mean 18 credits, pledging and a job you know I worked hard.

It took a combined 20 years for Urban and Terrell to complete their undergraduate degrees. For example, Urban needed to be self-reliant as an independent student; he struggled but was able to balance work and academics for a decade. He stated he did it by,

Never giving up. I just think that I believe if I set out to do something, then as long as it's willing and physically able, then I have to keep getting back up to accomplish it. Like I don't know what it would be like to not continue to work at my goals. So graduating from college was always a goal

After enrolling at WSU in 2000 and later leaving for the Navy, Terrell eventually returned in 2009 and graduated in 2012. He discussed how he did as follows:

Yeah how did I do it? I just had it in my mind, "You started this, and you need to finish it. You always wanted to get a degree in something, now no excuses do it, and do it

well.” And I felt like I did good, I brought my GPA up from like a 2.1 to a 3.0. But it was just more like you got to get this; you have to get this degree no matter what. And I really didn’t go out as much, I was really, pretty much to myself, but it was just like you have to get this done. And that’s why I look at other people. Mainly like other Black males per se and I’m like, “Man”. They got this degree or they got that degree, that’s like wow I love that. You know what I’m saying, like it is so empowering – it’s something that I’m not going to say is rare, it can be rare depending on where you’re from.

These Black men were able to reach their degree aspirations by remaining determined to succeed. After initial year setbacks at WSU, they viewed a college degree as something “valuable” and worth working hard to attain. These men sacrificed time, money, and their social lives to reach their personal goals. Participants also suggested that self-determination coupled with a strong support system aided in their persistence and attainment.

“I’d say it’s just the people around me:” The Push and Pull of Support Systems

When asked how they were able to persist and attain, several participants credited strong support systems inclusive of family, peers, community members, and WSU faculty and staff. They spoke about individuals who believed in and bolstered their degree aspirations and who, at times, scolded them when deemed necessary. Five years removed from WSU, Veinte recalled how he did it with the help of his academic advisor.

I had support. You need support in order to keep you going. The support system is what is needed and if you don't have that, you know there is no way. I think that's one of the basics, the most important thing to help you to get through everything. And I didn't say, I didn't mention [academic counselor] Jonathan Smithers, Smithers was – he was one of the main persons too in my freshman year.

Throughout this chapter, Black men acknowledged that someone was consistently “On my back,” and that, “The brothers came down hard,” when their academic performance was subpar. In order to succeed, they needed an extra push. Zach spoke about this point as he explained his resilience in college,

Yeah, you got to be yourself, you got to know what you want, but you also have to have somebody pushing you. And there has to be somebody who is not scared to tell you are

messing up. Yeah, someone that you respect, and you also have to give them room to push you, you can't get offended about every little criticism you hear. You know, you have to realize that not everyone who criticizes you is as they call it, hating. It was, sometimes it is the truth.

Support systems serve as a source of motivation to work through hardships and remain self-determined. Black men relied on the positive energy and encouragement of their support networks; individuals that understood the gravity of the undertaking or those who wish to see them succeed at academic endeavor. The following portion of E.J.'s interview expounds upon his concept:

Interviewer: So what makes you different? You know, why didn't it [dropping out] happen to you? What set's you aside – apart from these guys?

E.J: Man, I guess the people that I had in my circle, my ONE mentors, EOP, my parents, my wife, those people kept me going. You know, they knew the importance of getting my degree, going forth, becoming successful, becoming professional, and I guess all that just kept – because I had those people in my circle, I kept moving on. Maybe you know sub-consciously you know without reminding myself, you know? I guess, that's what I can say because I think that's what's most important.

Similar to the mentors E.J. recognized, Lonnie described the senior members of his fraternity as serving as role models and support system members.

Yeah I don't know, I really don't know man! I'd say it's just the people around me. From pledging it was the older brother named Kenyatta who brought me in. So that – just being around like Black men – like this is an older guy, he crossed like a 90's. He's a doctor and all. These were the kind of guys that brought doctors, grad students; so I had these different Black men around me. That's a thing about the fraternity that's why like I encourage anybody like join our organization like a fraternity, because it just opens you to like I guess like minded, and different individuals that will be around you, Live through them or their examples.

Bennet also emphasized the positive influence his support systems had in encouraging him to persist through the loss of his scholarship. "I've just been influenced heavily by the people in my life negative [incarcerated father] and positive. And it just definitely taught me that school is

where I need to be, and I'm trying to go." Unlike Bennet, Megaman credited his father with being a vital member of his support network, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt:

My father is the greatest man that I know, and he – my father never quit. My father has always been a constant in my life and I'm getting emotional just thinking about it. When I tell people this is like no matter what was going on even when my father was not in the house he was there. He made sure that I never had to look any place for a role model. And he never quit. He told me if you start something you finish it. It doesn't matter how long it takes you. And despite me and him having problems everything that he put in me you know everything that he like he taught me like I always tell people I wasn't raised. I feel like I was built.

Billy said that having faith helped him to remain enrolled at WSU, but he also accepted the importance of supportive individuals. Billy stated, "He's [Jesus] so grand that He orchestrates everything behind the scenes strategically and He places the right people in place at the right times to get everything done like a well oiled machine." Like Billy, Florence also pointed to an all-encompassing support system.

Interviewer: How did you make it this far? How did you do it? You talked about your resilience, and your family, but you've had other relatives not make it. They had those same experiences, same family, grandma, everyone else, but you made it. How did you do it?

Florence: I would love to say that I did it by myself, but I believe that there is a power greater than myself that has allowed me and afforded me the ability to be in this place, at this time. When I say a power greater than myself, what I mean is not solely just relying on me, I can't do it all myself, I need help! Whether it be my peers, whether it be professors, whether it be a power unseen, a belief in something, but a power greater than just me to help me navigate through this thing.

Participants in this study acknowledged receiving assistance during their academic journey. A unique finding among these men was the concept of a support system "push" and "influence." Men reported being appreciative of the push they received from support system members more so than obtaining direct assistance. Furthermore, participants discussed being influenced by mentors, namely inspirational men who had achieved academic and lifestyle goals.

For instance, at the conclusion of Nasir's interview he asked me, "How does it feel to have made it?" I replied with a simplistic description of surreal graduation day joy. However, after further analysis, I believe there was a profound and significant meaning to his question. I suspect that Nasir was searching for a response beyond my graduation day recollection. I believe he was looking for a glimpse into his future, justification for his labor, 4-year investment, and blind faith that a better life awaited him at the conclusion of his academic journey. And perhaps, I was his proof.

This premise explains why the majority of participants understood their academic resilience as an outcome of self-determination and support systems. They were driven to excel and obtain their degrees and were optimistic that "something more" awaited them. And, when they began to deviate off path due to internal and external threats to attainment or the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class, they relied on their support systems to provide a "push" back on course, encouragement to persevere, and an example of their purposes.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the myriad of themes that emerged from interviews with successful Black male upperclassman and recent graduates. Participants provided accounts of the internal and external threats to college completion and the protective factors used to counter risks. They reported how Black men navigated the HSI environment and the impact of that milieu on their achievement and attainment. Through the lenses of CRT, the various intersecting social identities that shape their resilience experiences were discussed, including how participants helped other Black men; an empowering experience for all involved. The chapter culminated with counter-narratives explaining their academic success.

Black male collegians encounter numerous obstacles on their journeys through college, including high tuition rates and decreasing financial resources, institutional racism, alienation, and a campus ethos' that negatively informs their sense of belonging (Cuyjet, 2006; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Harper, 2012b; Hilton, Wood & Lewis, 2012; Strayhorn, 2008b); while leveraging peers, relatives, cultural agents, external community members, and spirituality to help them persist (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper, 2006b, 2009a, 2012b; Hilton, Wood & Lewis, 2012; Herndon, 2003; Museus, 2011; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). The perils for Black men in this study that pushed them to consider dropping out were internal and external risk factors. Participants noted experiencing academic (dis) integration and a fractured sense of belonging that resulted from being ill-prepared for the rigors of college-level work and social life. In addition, men battled severe, life-threatening physical and mental illnesses and diseases, which served to impede their achievement and attainment. Participants also described being hindered by the lack of financial support for college and by the financial strife instigated by incarceration and unplanned fatherhood.

To counter the scope of risk factors, it was important to tap into individual, family, and social-environmental level protective factors. Dedication, self-efficacy, and strong faith propelled some past threats, while other men gave accounts of receiving support from cohesive family units, siblings, and supportive wives. Notably, nearly 80% of the 23 respondents attributed impactful faculty, peer networks, and help seeking tendencies to their collegiate survival. Many Black students described Weaver State University, a HSI, as a supportive environment. The inclusive mission of the university offered Black men support by encouraging faculty and staff to develop meaningful mentorship relationships and academic and social support programs that lent to a nurturing campus climate for Black males, similar to that of

HBCUs.

Black men also described how their identities of race, gender and social class were constructed, (re)defined, and (re)shaped, often by navigating blatant racism, microaggressions, and by being gendered by faculty. By many accounts, these experiences caused participants to employ a prove them wrong mentality. Participants adopted an increased “assertive academic posture” (Moore et al., 2003, p. 67) that consisted of increased academic work ethic, focus, and drive in order to disprove stereotypes associated with being Black male collegians. Findings also indicate that Black male experiences with social class, particularly environmental violence and resource deficiency continues to put them at risk as college students. For instance, men reported being robbed at gunpoint during their enrollment at WSU. Given their collegiate experiences, Black men reported overwhelmingly that they shared their accounts with other Black male collegians – some delivering their messages successfully, while others’ messages fell on deaf ears. Men also shared their counter narratives that explained that their academic aspirations were attained through a firm determination and an engaged support system.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 6 presents an overview of the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, and methodological approach. This chapter also provides a summary of major research findings leading into a discussion of implications for practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research on Black male collegiate experiences, followed by closing comments.

Overview of the Study

.Black male student postsecondary degree attainment is one of the most ominous challenges facing U.S. postsecondary education. The trending data and numerous empirical studies documenting Black male educational struggles are sobering. Researchers have attempted to explain the dismal trends and publicize the dilemma of Black college men. Extant literature has underscored academic underachievement, low educational attainment, and less successful collegiate experiences of this group across different institutional settings (Frierson, Pearson & Wyche, 2009; Garibaldi, 2007; Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008; Harper, 2009b; Harper, 2012a; Hilton, Wood & Lewis, 2012; Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008b). Existing research indicates that Black men are academically alienated, racialized on campuses, culturally disengaged from educational pursuits, develop academic defense mechanisms, are more likely to be incarcerated than other racial groups, and are unable to afford the rising cost of college tuition (Burd, 2002; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Harper, 2012b; Mauer & King, 2007; Nelson-Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer & Wood, 2012a; Perna, 2000; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

A deficit approach has been dominant in examining Black men's educational conundrums. This approach focuses on the afflicted, neglecting the healthy specimens. However, recently, deficit-informed research has been progressively replaced by a research approach that emphasizes the elements of Black male academic success at various institutions, including PWIs (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006a, 2009a; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010) and Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) (Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt, Burt & Franklin, 2012; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Although this strand of research offers a perspective of Black male success from limited institutional contexts, it has overused theoretical and conceptual lenses, such as: "Cool Pose" (Majors & Billson, 1992); interactionalist theory (Tinto, 1993), and the cultural-ecological theory (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Moreover, it often focuses on the effects of a single dimension of social identity, such as race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, and neglects how the intersectionality of identities influence the academic resilience of Black men (Howard, 2008; Morales & Trotman, 2011).

While there have been advances in the empirical research on Black male collegians, examinations of this population from diverse contexts, theoretical underpinnings, and multiple identities have remained limited. Therefore, this present study addressed the gap in the literature, and furthered the understanding of the academic resilience experiences of successful Black male collegians from the context of intersecting identities and institutional milieu. The theoretical framework that guided this study drew upon two distinctive collections of scholarship: critical race theory and academic resilience.

Bell's (1987, 1995) CRT began as a derivative of critical legal studies and has since expanded to examine minority student racialized, gendered, and classed educational experiences

(Bell, 1987, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Solórzano, 2001; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Described by Solórzano et al. (2000) as a transdisciplinary blend of sociology, ethnic studies, history, feminist studies, and legal scholarship, CRT is based on the premise that any examination of marginalized people must consider intersections with other facets of identity, such as gender, race and social class. In relation to Black men's postsecondary attainment, CRT holds that the socially constructed concepts of colorblindness, meritocracy, and neutrality may be experienced contrariwise by this student cohort, due to their intersecting identities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). As such, CRT provides useful tool for Black men to share their experiential knowledge through counter-narratives that negate majoritarian "truth" that they do not succeed in college (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The second theoretical perspective that provided a vantage point to examine the educational experiences of Black college men was academic resilience. Morales and Trotman (2011) defined the process of academic resilience as "the process and results that are part of the life story of an individual who has been academically successful, despite obstacles that prevent the majority of others with the same background from succeeding" (p. 8). Resilience theory has been utilized by educational researchers to investigate the experiences of underrepresented minorities in secondary and tertiary educational settings from the perspectives of race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability/disability, and language (Brown, 2008; Cavazos, Johnson, Fielding & Cavazos, 2010; Castro, Garcia, Cavazos & Castro, 2011; Floyd, 1996; Ford, Kokjie & Lewis, 1996; Howell, 2004; Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Morales, 2008, 2010; Morales & Trotman, 2004, 2011; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991); making

resilience theory an ideal complement to CRT and a markedly useful tool to investigate the educational experiences of Black male collegians. Consisting of two basic concepts, risk and positive adaptation, academic resilience is valuable in understanding of Black college men's responses to internal and external threats.

The purpose of the present study was to gain a better understanding and provide a description of how Black male upperclassmen and recent college graduates experienced the process of resilience in the context of their educational attainment at a HSI. Specifically, this study examined how Black male collegians identified perceived risk factors; selected and deployed the applicable protective factors to counter academic, social, and financial threats to success; and how this process was influenced by socioeconomic status, race, and gender. This study attempted to answer four research questions: (a) What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at an HSI during their college years; (b) How do Black male students at an HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors; (c) What influence, if any, has race and gender had on the academic resilience of Black male students at a HSI, and; (d) How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?

Methodology

Qualitative research methods were selected for this study to provide rich accounts of the lived experiences (counter narratives) of academically resilient Black male collegians at a Hispanic serving institution through the theoretical lenses of critical race theory by examining how race, gender, and/or class influenced their lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Hammersley, 1989; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). A qualitative, narrative inquiry-based exploration provides a more comprehensive perspective by extracting valuable

insights from participants, eliciting a significant understanding of the meaning of experience (Patton, 2002), and transcending the measurement of variables that is associated with quantitative studies (Creswell, 2009).

Data collection was conducted over a 6-month period during the 2013 – 2014 academic year by conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews, analyzing financial aid and admissions application documents, and administering a short demographic survey. The participants attended Weaver State University (WSU), a mid-Atlantic, public, 4-year HSI, with a total undergraduate enrollment of approximately 6,500 (Fall 2012). During the 2012 – 2013 academic year the racial make up was 35% Hispanic, 26% White, 20% Black, 10% other, followed by 8% Asian. Roughly 75% of the students qualified for financial aid.

Twenty-three Black males (1 junior, 9 seniors, 13 recent graduates) participated in the study. Purposeful, criterion based sampling was used. All participants met the following criteria: (a) Black male recent graduates (maximum 5 years removed), actively enrolled junior and senior class standing with declared majors; (b) a minimum of 2.0 cumulative grade point average over a minimum of 65 credits; (c) no pending academic or disciplinary sanctions at the time of study; and (d) non-athlete. Given that nearly 70% of Black male collegians do not attain a baccalaureate degree within 6 years (Harper, 2006b), the participant selection was intended to identify resilient Black males who were on target to degree attainment.

Eleven men entered WSU as first-time, freshmen and 12 were admitted as transfer students. The average GPA of the cohort was 3.11. These men were primarily non-traditional students with ages ranging from 21 through 44, and an average age of 29 years (graduates = 31, and upperclassmen = 27). Nineteen of 23 men's family income levels were between \$0 – \$60,000, 39% met the poverty threshold level, and all 23 men received some form of financial

aid. Each participant discussed experiencing hardship in the form of poverty, crime stricken neighborhoods, and/or growing up in underdeveloped third world nations.

The primary method of analyzing the data in this study was Lieblich et al.'s (1998) categorical-content analysis which is a means of organizing, describing, classifying, and interpreting the narrative data collected through semi-structured interviews (Lieblich et al., 1998; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). After becoming familiar with the digital, audio-recorded, interviews, I used the Nvivo 10 Qualitative Research Assisted Software to efficiently organize codes into themes via theoretical thematic analysis (Bazeley, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I reworked the themes and sub-themes until concise distinctions could be drawn between them (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993). The themes were identified as a way of restorying the participants' narratives relevant to an individual's resilience experiences (Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 1993).

The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC)

Findings from this study empirically substantiate theoretical propositions that stem from academic resilience, and critical race theories, and conjoin additional theoretical underpinnings that are useful for conceptualization of Black male collegiate attainment. The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC) (see Figure 3) provided a framework that infused the intersectionality of social identities construct from CRT with experiential risk and protective factors to explain the process of academic resilience experienced by Black male collegians. The three phases presented in the BMARC served as categories for the themes that emerged from the data analysis. During the initial phase of the Black male academic resilience process, study participants encountered internal and external threats to college completion that resulted from a

lack of academic and social integration, physical and mental health challenges, and financial hardships. Additionally, Black men's academic resilience experiences were shaped by the intersecting social identities of race and gender and race and class. In tandem, these two risk factors negatively affected the collegiate experiences of Black male collegians causing feelings of despair, self-doubt, and departure. As study participants moved from the initial phase to the second, by making an internal decision to remain enrolled despite the aforementioned threats and obstacles, they were resolute to persist. Considering the weight of the risk factors they were faced with, these men undoubtedly required assistance.

Phase II of Figure 3 displays the protective factors that the participants selected and deployed in order to overcome the risks to academic success, inclusive of individual, familial, and social-environmental level protective factors. The data regarding Phase II shows that the Black men sought help proactively and obtained assistance from relatives and campus-based social/academic support networks. Subsequent to employing protective factors and successfully combating threat, Black men progressed through to the third resilience process phase, which is to share their experiential counter narratives in the form of peer pedagogy that would educate other Black male collegians. More importantly, their experiential knowledge served as a form of self-actualization and self-efficacy as they faced new risk factors and/or academic challenges, yet continued to negotiate the intersectionality of their social identities.

The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC) illustrates the process of how participants experienced perceived risk to achievement and attainment, selected and employed apposite protective factors to overcome and negotiate the intersecting identities of race, gender, and socioeconomic status that informed their experiences.

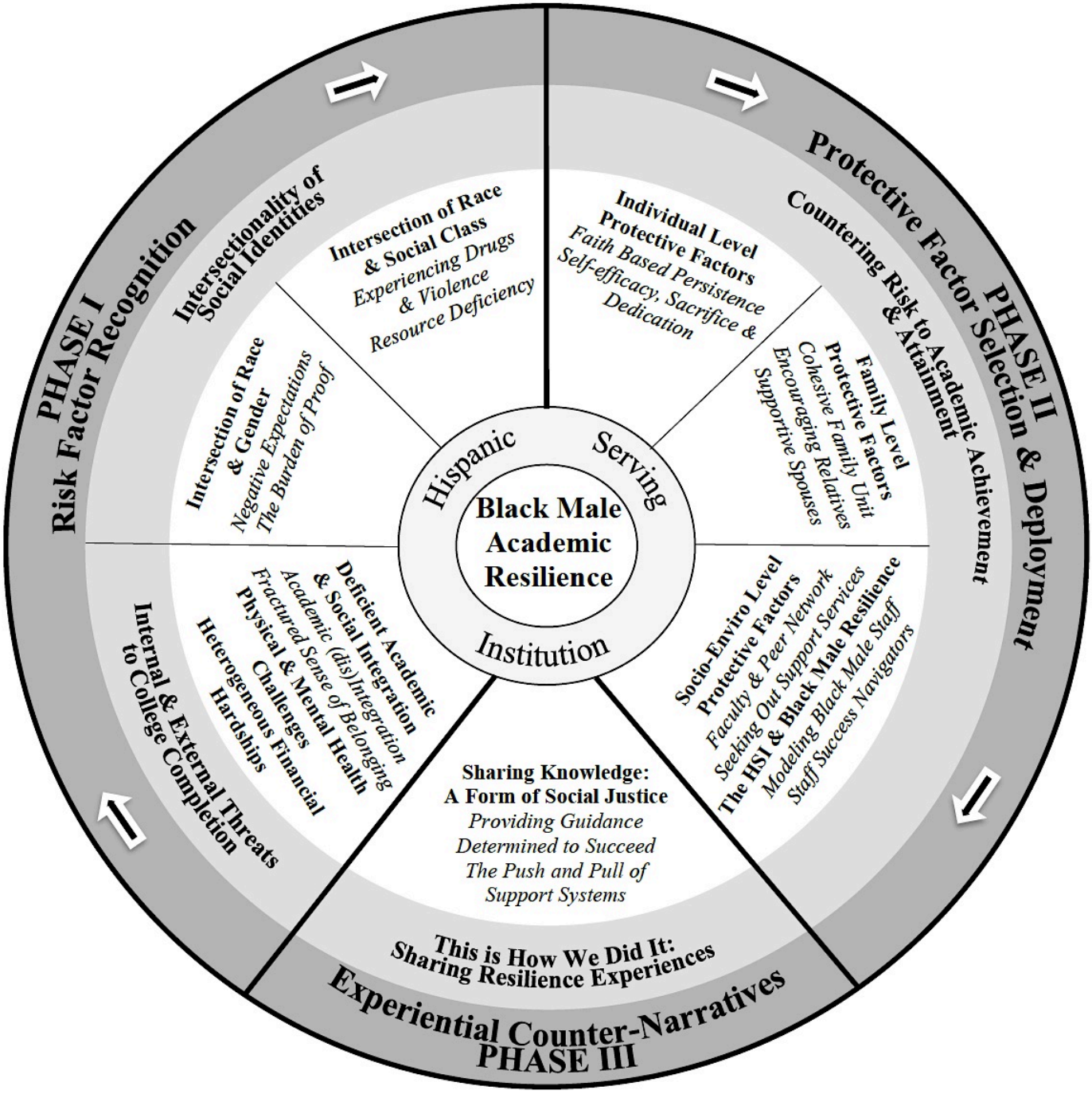


Figure 3: The Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle

Summary of Findings and Discussion

Internal and External Threats to Attainment

The following sections discuss in detail the findings that inform the BMARC in the context of the existing literature on Black male collegiate experiences. Researchers have investigated the myriad of complexities involved in the risk to Black male attainment and achievement, such as health complications, social integration, academic under-preparedness, and financial hardships (Cuyjet, 1997; Ellis, 2002; Frierson, Pearson, & Wyche, 2009; Harper, 2009a; Kitzrow, 2003; Palmer, Davis, Moore III, & Hilton, 2010; Solórzano et al., 2000; Strayhorn, 2008b, 2013; Tinto, 1993). With regard to the research question, What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at an HSI during their college years?, the present study found that Black male college completion was threatened by internal and external challenges such as lack of academic and social integration, health issues, and financial barriers.

Strayhorn (2008b) and Cuyjet (1997) argued that poor pre-college academic preparedness and a lack of a sense of belonging were factors that significantly impinged upon the academic attainment of Black men in college. In this study, participants experienced substantial struggles with academic integration and a sense of belonging that triggered feelings of departure. The current study revealed that participants who enrolled at WSU as freshmen were placed in remedial courses as a result of receiving below average Accuplacer (placement test) test scores, while transfer students were required to take prerequisite courses. Cuyjet (1997) and Griffin, Jayakumar, Jones, and Allen (2010) found that Black college men from low-socioeconomic backgrounds were admitted to college at a significantly lower rate than their counterparts, and those who do enroll confront considerable academic adversity. In the current study, freshmen often attributed their academic under-preparation to the lack of sufficient development in

secondary school and not to a lack of effort. While participants might have deficiencies in multiple skill sets, they specifically explained agonizing in remedial writing courses, frequently receiving failing grades on exams, writing assignments, and repeating developmental courses altogether. Study participants described being particularly frustrated with these outcomes given their prior achievement in high school English. Transfer students in particular stated that they were under-prepared at their former 2 and 4-year institutions for the rigor of course work associated with their academic majors at WSU. Specifically, the findings suggested that Black male transfer students lack of confidence, coupled with their inadequate study skills, adversely affected their abilities to keep pace with their major courses. They reported feeling overwhelmed and in doubt of their academic abilities. These men discussed the difficulty of investing far more time and effort studying and completing coursework for major classes than they were accustomed to managing previously. In addition, participants stated that unresponsive faculty members exacerbated the issue by not maintaining office hours and not returning emails and voice messages. Both participants who were admitted as freshmen and those who were transfer students described their academic experiences as disheartening; leading to acute feelings of departure at some point in time during the college years.

Study participants suffered from a fractured sense of belonging. They yearned for a traditional college social experience, yet reported difficulty establishing healthy friendships with other Black male peers on campus. The participants who struggled with fitting in noted that they were unable to relate with Black male students due to significant age gaps, differences in levels of life experience, and the inability to identify peers with identical conservative moral and ethical values. Participants in this study did not want to get involved with other Black male peers whose pastimes on campus consisted of womanizing and binge drinking. Strayhorn (2008b) contended

that Black men attending PWIs deal with alienation and isolation resulting from racially charged, unwelcoming campuses. However, participants in this study suffered with what they described as alienation; as they reported feeling like “outcasts” among same race male counterparts at a HSI.

College students encounter numerous physical and mental health related ailments, which affect their retention and degree completion (Coleman, Chapman & Wang, 2012; Kitzrow, 2003; Lindsey, Reed, Lyons, Hendricks, Mead & Butler, 2011; Neville, Heppner, Ji & Thye, 2004; Piorkowski, 1983; Phinney & Haas, 2003; Rawson, Bloomer, & Kendall, 1994; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Upright, Esslinger, & Hays, 2014). Psychological stressors that damage the collegiate experience and threaten the academic success of Black students stem from racialized campus interactions (Coleman, Chapman, & Wang; 2012; Neville, Heppner, Ji & Thye, 2004). Furthermore, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) found that Black males at PWIs suffered from racial battleground fatigue; the insurmountable marginalization that leads to the psychological stress that is injurious to Black male degree completion.

However, while the empirical evidence reinforces these contentions, a notable finding in this study is that Black men at a HSI reported non-race-based mental health issues, unlike their PWI counterparts. This study found that men suffered from a number of physical and mental health ailments, including: HIV, low-level depression, guilt, narcolepsy, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Poor physical health is also a source of emotional and mental stress and has been found to adversely impact college student academic achievement, engagement, and attainment (Rawson, Bloomer, & Kendall, 1994; Upright et al., 2014). Men in this study reported that physical health conditions caused severe mental and emotional stress that resulted in their contemplation of leaving college. They described the “bad mood swings,” “terrible stress,” and the negative impact on their “self-confidence” produced by their respective

physical illnesses as being unbearable. Men also shared how the potential complications from their condition were “always on my mind,” and how the thought of “getting sick and not being able to finish school” was a constant stressor. Participants reported falling into deep depressions that shook their confidence. They anxiously anticipated the corollary of their illnesses; the negative implications on continued enrollment and graduation. In alignment with the literature, the mental anguish associated with the uncertainty of their conditions lowered their self-esteem and significantly diminished their collegiate experiences (Iarovici, 2014; Rawson et al., 1994; Upright et al., 2014).

Iarovici (2014) found that, according to data collected from the *American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2010* survey, first-year students experienced the “lowest levels of emotional health in 25 years” (p. 3). Since the survey results were released, the trend has persisted and the reported disorders have increased beyond the stress associated with college to include a number of psychiatric disorders such as substance abuse, eating disorders, severe depression, and anxiety. These psychological disorders have been found to adversely affect student retention and degree completion (Kitzrow, 2003; Iarovici, 2004; Piorkowski, 1983; Rawson et al., 1994). Similarly, the findings of the present study supported the idea that Black men experienced low-level depression, guilt, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Study participants dealing with psychological issues expressed feelings of “despair” and thoughts of “giving up.” They described their situations as helpless. Emotional issues also influenced their self-destructive behavior compelling them to act out in ways that directly jeopardized their academic careers and overall well-being. The Black men in this study became withdrawn from class, failed to participate, and their emotional disorders subjected them to lowered grades.

In addition to the internal risk factors, research on Black student academic persistence and attainment has demonstrated that external risk, namely the lack of financial resources, has also marred their experiences (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Davis, Nagle, Richards & Awokoya, 2013; Long & Riley, 2007; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Perna, 2000; Strayhorn, 2008a). The students in this study discussed their difficulties paying tuition, supporting themselves, and how financial barriers impacted their educational journeys. Some participants reported that during their college enrollment they often felt that they did not have enough money to afford a single meal some days, and that they would regularly go without eating, paying rent (leading to eviction), or enrolling for consecutive semesters.

Many of the men who struggled financially came from low socioeconomic backgrounds-- low-income, single parent households. However, while SES explained the lack of finances for some participants, findings indicated that financial hardship for others was self-inflicted, inclusive of the loss of full tuition scholarships, incarceration, and fatherhood. In all, the financial hardships faced by the participants complicated their academic performance by extending their time to degree and increasing loan indebtedness.

Selecting and Deploying Protective Factors

Although the institutional contexts differed, the findings from the current study, conducted at an HSI, substantiate the previous research at HBCUs and PWIs that found that Black male collegiate resilience was supported by strong self-efficacy; peer, familial, and mentor support; and ardent spiritual faith (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Fries-Britt et al., 2012; Harper, 2006, 2009a; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Manns, 1997; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Riggins et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2008b; Watson, 2006;

Williamson, 2010). In response to the research question 2, How do Black male students at an HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors?, the findings were that Black men selected and deployed protections that were organized within three distinct categories: individual, familial, and socio-environmental level protective factors (Morales & Trotman, 2011; Olsson et al., 2003).

When faced with risk, the research participants used the individual level protective factor self-determination in order to persist. Participants' perseverance can be explained by Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan's (1991) self-determination theory, and Strayhorn's (2013a) investigation of the concept of *grit*. In the educational context, self-determination theory holds that students are motivated to succeed when either their intrinsic abilities, social networks, or abilities to control their academic situations are in play (Deci et al., 1991). In her investigation of the motivation of high achieving Black students, Griffin (2006) found that their motivations were reinforced by setting personal learning goals and an appreciation of the worth of the educational activity. Similarly, Strayhorn (2013a) found that successful Black male collegians are grittier, or displayed significant levels of mental toughness, drive, and courage in dealing with academic challenges and earned considerably higher grades. Essentially, while experiencing risk factors, Black men described taking complete control of their academic outcomes and felt responsible for any shortcomings and achievements. The participants attributed their personal sacrifice and self-investment to the accomplishment of academic goals, as evident by some men stating that they had "no choice" but to succeed. In fact, Black men were intentional in their effort to circumvent the risks associated with their poverty-stricken urban environments by dedicating substantial study time and limiting social interaction so as to develop a "love for learning." Despite overwhelming experiences with risk, participants shared that they remained positive and focused

on earning a degree by “not feeding into my thoughts that I can’t get through this.” Notably, Black men in this study stated that their college degree attainment was “a matter of life and death” and employed a “do or die mentality” to insure the prospects of upward social mobility. They were driven to achieve “by any means necessary.” This finding aligns with Winkle-Wagner’s (2010) research on Black college women and their postsecondary aspirations. Women associated attainment with life or death both literally--falling victim to the social ills of their community--and metaphorically, the life and death of the dream of degree completion.

Consistent with the research conducted by Herndon (2003), Riggins et al. (2008), Watson (2006), and Wood and Hilton (2012b), the religious faith of the Black male collegians in the present study was described as being a support for their college persistence. Nearly one third of the participants acknowledged that they were being “built up” in their faith, which helped them focus their efforts on their academic goals. Prayer was identified as a coping strategy to help them manage the routine academic stressors of college life such as exams and research papers. Similar to the students in Wood and Hilton’s (2012) study, prayer was utilized as a means to overcome more significant barriers, such as lack of financial resources and to receive satisfactory marks on degree progress reports. Students in this study also reported receiving “revelations,” which successfully guided their decision-making processes.

According to Manns (1997), the African American family has historically been a source of support and encouragement for Black youth. For decades Black collegians have depended on the family unit to assist them with overcoming the financial, social, and academic barriers to success in college (Griffin, 2006; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Previous studies found that familial support was a factor consistently associated with Black male students’ academic successes and abilities to attain college education (Griffin, 2006; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Williamson, 2010;

Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991). As such, although several participants in this study faced critical threats to their attainment, parents and/or siblings with high expectations and supportive spouses enabled them to persist in college.

Results of this study suggest that regardless of parental education level, Black men sought and received judicious advice from parents regarding how to effectively communicate in the classroom setting. In addition, not only were parents an ongoing source of motivation for Black men to excel academically, but the participants acknowledged that they modeled the success behaviors of siblings who had high expectations. These men, predominately first generation college students, essentially embraced the expectations of parents and close family members.

The resilience literature has primarily focused on the parental unit as the central family-level protective factor (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1995). However, Black male collegians in this study identified their spouses as being significantly influential in their academic success. Whether providing financial assistance or serving as college role models--as one participant stated, "she believed in me, and my goals"-- spousal support was deemed critical to Black male academic success. As Fries-Britt et al. (2012) found, the establishment of strong relationships with faculty, administrators, and academic/support program peers was critical to the college persistence and graduation for Black men. Peer and faculty support, coupled with student success programs, is known to facilitate Black male academic achievement at both PWIs and HBCUs (Astin, 1993; Flowers, 2012; Harper, 2006a, 2009a; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Similar to previous research, the current study found that nearly 80% of the participants accessed social-environmental level protective factors to counteract academic threats at a HSI. These participants discussed building study groups via networks of racially diverse peers. This positively affected

the sense of belonging of the participants (Strayhorn, 2008b) and facilitated their academic achievement. Through peer networks they also garnered advice and varying perspectives from experienced students about navigating the campus, interacting with faculty, and academic program selection.

Williamson (2010) found that faculty members played a significant role in the academic success of Black college men. The narratives of the men in this study confirm this finding. Participants showed that they benefitted from faculty interaction regardless of race or gender, and that they benefitted particularly from their encouragement and confidence; which enriched their collegiate experiences. Participants reported that White faculty members underscored the importance of their attainment as Black men, and the participants appreciated the encouragement of a non-Black faculty member.

Institutional support services, retention programs, and male mentoring initiatives have been found to be an essential protective factor utilized by Black college men (Cuyjet, 2006; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Palmer & Wood, 2012; Robert, 2008). Much like the research on institutional support programs, participants at this HSI also relied upon program services and agents to help them overcome the barriers to attainment. An interesting finding in this study pertains to the proactive help seeking tendencies of these men. They reached out to agents or joined the appropriate support program. The findings showed that nearly all of the men, who identified institutionalized programs and services as a protective factor, initiated contact with those entities or individuals and directly requested help. Within the confines of support programs, Black men recognize the facilitators, mentors, and peers as being reliable protective resources and instrumental in their degree attainment.

The proactive nature of participants to identify and reach out to campus agents and services for academic assistance, social integration issues, guidance financing college, and counseling services was undoubtedly a powerful protective factor. This outcome substantiates Sheu and Sedlacek's (2004) findings which indicated that Black male, help-seeking tendencies were healthier than those of their White and Asian counterparts (p.135). This finding may also help explain why these Black men attain, and their less successful Black male counterparts did not.

The Hispanic Serving Institution: Supporting Black Male Resilience

Findings from this study indicated that the campus ethos of WSU supported Black male resilience substantially. The characteristics of the HSI in this study aligned with those of the predominately White GEM institutions identified by Museus (2011), and the characteristics of a healthy racial climate recognized by Solórzano et al. (2000). Solórzano et al. (2000) found that a "collegiate racial climate is positive" (p. 62) when it features: a racially inclusive environment for staff and students, targeted academic and social support programs, and is mission driven to support various facets of diversity (Carroll, 1998; Guinier, Fine, & Balin, 1997; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Li & Carroll, 2007).

Comparable to the majority of Hispanic serving institutions, WSU's mission is not focused on the achievement and attainment of a particular ethnic cohort of students as it is at HBCUs (Hurtado & Saenz, 2006; Nunez, Elizondo, & HACU, 2012). Rather, the institution's principal mission clearly emphasizes access, celebration of diversity, and enrichment of its host community. Moreover, several support programs have existed at WSU for decades and have served large cohorts of students. Some of these programs employed salaried staff, while others relied on significant university-wide volunteers and financial sponsorship. Despite those features,

participants reported selecting WSU based primarily upon affordability and convenience. None of the men were aware of WSU's mission, HSI status, or the significance of its federal designation. The university's mission is reflected in the diversity of its nearly 1,000 faculty and staff, consisting of approximately 42% White, 27% Black, 18% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and 3% other/unspecified individuals. The campus ethos is a derivative of its mission, as reflected in its intentional recruitment of qualified faculty, staff, and administrators who are experienced in working with diverse students in an urban setting.

Museus (2011) asserted that minority students connect to the institutional "culture" through individuals or "collective cultural agents" who facilitate student achievement and attainment. He found that institutional culture, climate, programs, and practices that promoted targeted support networks influenced minority student success (p. 154). The findings of this study support Museus' (2011) suggestions, and run counter to those of Reddick et al. (2012), who argued that Black males at a HSI experience college much like their counterparts at PWIs – isolated, racialized, and lacking institutional support.

In response to the research question 2, How do Black male students at an HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors?, I found that meaningful relationships with faculty, staff, Black male administrators, faculty, and staff success models were supportive features of the HSI. Study participants largely regarded the HSI as a supportive nurturing milieu through their involvement in support programs, and contact with institutional cultural agents. These men discussed experiencing nurturing, family-like, mentoring relationships with faculty, staff and administrators, which Sutton (2006) and Butler et al. (2013) found to be critical to the academic success of Black men. The relationships, often described as close friendships, were deemed essential to the acquisition by these men of the social capital that

assisted in their matriculation through college. Some study participants stated that mentors facilitated their drive and held them accountable for achieving their academic goals. Others participants noted that mentors served as sounding boards for difficult life decisions that could have potentially impacted their academic trajectories. Some participant mentor – mentee relationships were based on specific academic programs and services, while others came into existence organically; through a common interest or experience connecting Black men to supportive cultural agents. Nonetheless, mentoring positively impacted the collegiate experiences of the participants in this study by providing the cultivation required for Black men to succeed in college (Butler, 2013; Cuyjet, 2006; Sutton, 2006).

Participants in this study who did not experience direct mentor-mentee relationships discussed the benefits of modeling the interpersonal skills of successful Black and Latino male faculty, staff, and administrators with whom they came into contact. These men also aspired to attain levels of professional accomplishment and personal satisfaction identical to those experienced by the models, as was learned from their counter narratives of success via impromptu interactions. The models, in essence, served as proof or examples of the types of Black men that the participants could become. Markus and Nurius (1986) and Oyserman, Gant, and Ager (1995) defined this realm of self-concept as possible selves theory. This theory holds that an individual's aspirations and behaviors are influenced by whom they wish to become in the future, in addition to the person they fear becoming. Participants in this study observed the personal and professional demeanor of Black and Latino male faculty and staff and ultimately designed their possible selves to include some of the characteristics of those men.

The role models gave “cognitive form” to the aspirations of the participants to attain a college degree (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 955). Therefore, the importance of Black and Latino

male role models cannot be overstated, particularly as it relates to the participants in this study. Many of the men came from deprived social backgrounds. The earliest development of their possible selves is directly linked to “previous social comparisons” of other Black men in their communities (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 1995). When discussing modeling Black staff, the participants realized that “I could be just like these guys,” or as Oyserman et al. (1995) indicated, “What others are now, I could become” (p. 1216). Participants learned that many of the success models overcame internal and external threats that were identical to those that they were currently combating. This fact instilled a greater sense of hope and focus about cultivating their possible selves. Participants also observed how the Black male models interacted with one another both professionally and socially, and how they spoke about supportive families and about their careers. This observation of Black masculinity provided study participants with perhaps an entirely new framework of manhood. Harris and Harper (2008) posited that young men internalize messages of masculinity, and that these reduce men to being competitive, combative, and aggressive. Black masculinity has often been associated with social class and the accompanying societal ills such as: violence, ignorance, hypersexuality, and anger. The men in this study began to model a masculinity that celebrated intelligence, admiration, and professionalism, and they interacted as such with their Black male counterparts on campus.

Essentially, participants felt supported as Black men by campus cultural agents, and they found comfort within the racial diversity of the campus, which has been found to positively impact the population’s academic achievement (Cuyjet, 1997; Davis, 1994; Hall & Rowan, 2001). Study participants who transferred from HBCUs indicated that the new HSI environment was comparably nurturing and supportive and reported feeling “embraced” by the university upon their entrance. These men talked about networking opportunities with faculty, staff and

students, and reported experiencing a sense of belonging across the university. Others compared their experiences to the marginalized accounts of their counterparts attending PWIs. One participant explained that, “you don’t feel singled out because of your race, because you’re in a sea of different types of people.” Participants reported that they “loved being here” and celebrated the close relationships that they were able to develop with faculty. This finding suggests that, overall, the HSI racial, social, and cultural climate was remarkably supportive of Black male success and was, therefore, an intricate protective factor.

Resilience within the Context of Critical Race Theory

Critical race theorists have contended that the postsecondary educational experiences of minority students are adversely impacted by their intersecting social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or socioeconomic status (Brayboy, 2005; Buenavista et al., 2009; Donner, 2005; Harper, 2009a; Hiraldo, 2010; Liu, 2009; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000; Teranishi et al., 2009). These findings are particularly relevant and critical for Black college men who have been marginalized in higher educational settings (Donner, 2005; Harper, 2009a; Strayhorn, 2013b). Researchers also found that the counter-narratives of marginalized men assisted in the deconstruction of racist, gendered, and classed majoritarian views and that they offered the lived experiences of Black men as evidence of success; upholding CRT focus on social justice (Harper, 2009a; Keels, 2013; Solórzano et al., 2000; Strayhorn, 2013b).

.In response to the research question 3, What influence, if any, has race, gender and social class had on the academic resilience of Black male students at an HSI?, I found that the experiences of some Black men in this study corroborated prior research findings. While the overall campus ethos was positive and supportive of Black men by the accounts of the

participants, the study participants' intersecting identities of race and gender, and race and class complicated their academic achievement, persistence, and attainment. Additionally, in response to the research question 4, How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?, I illustrated that through counter-narratives Black men not only shared their ordeals, but offered insight into how they persevered to attainment and offered peer pedagogy to other minority students (Harper, 2009a, 2013).

The intersection of race and gender. Proponents of critical race theory have argued that race in the US is socially constructed and used in the subordination of minority groups and, when coupled with facets of identity, it plays out in a variety of negative ways (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). For participants in this study, the CRT tenet of permanence of racism was manifested in blatant racist and microaggressive attacks targeted at the intersection of their racial and gender identities. In fact, 18 participants reported that as a result of being Black and male they were subjected to a host of microaggressive and blatantly racist actions. These men stated they were publically branded “thugs” by White male faculty and were erroneously assumed to have gained admission through the athletics program. As a result of their direct experiences and /or their internalizations, many believed “being a Black man the expectation is mostly negative.” Men in this study also discussed experiencing instances of microaggression based on their gender and race that evoked feelings of self-doubt, anger, and shame. Most notably, Black faculty also dealt Black-on-Black microaggressions by disparaging the academic prowess of Black men and condemning their physical appearance.

Massey and Fischer (2005) and Harper (2009a) agreed that minority men are exposed to negative stereotypes in multiple social settings that are exacerbated through their portrayals in

the media. Consequently, the internalization of racism, coupled with gender bias, may be more prevalent in this population (Howard, 2008). While some participants in this study were not directly exposed to overt racism or microaggressions at WSU, many struggled with internalized racism. As Black men they were compelled to prove their belongingness as college students. This, in fact, triggered what Moore et al. (2003) defined as the ‘prove them wrong’ coping mechanism; a psychological response to being viewed intellectually inferior as a consequence of race and gender.

Similar to the men in Moore et al.’s (2003) research, participants in this study believed “You got a lot to prove, you got the whole race on your back,” and they subsequently adopted an assertive academic posture. This stance included an intensified focus on academics, along with active classroom participation and effort. Participants often felt that, because of their race and gender, overachievement was required to gain equal standing among their peers and approval from faculty. In addition, they were self-conscious of their intersecting ethnic and gender identity and the associated hyper-masculine stereotype. Ultimately, they felt the need to assume a non-threatening façade to comfort faculty members. An interesting finding in this study is that in addition to the need to “prove them wrong,” Black men desired to prove themselves wrong. In other words, they sought to dismantle the self-doubt caused by lived experiences with structural racism and its impact on the Black male psyche.

Navigating social disorder and resource-deficient communities. Utilizing CRT as a theoretical lens to understand collegiate experiences, Savas (2014) found that as a result of the permanence of racism and the impact of intersecting identities of race and class, minority college students’ impoverished socioeconomic backgrounds worked to hinder their postsecondary achievement and degree completion. Cohen and Nee (2000), Massey (2006), and Savas (2014)

concluded that minority male students come from resource deficient communities with substandard secondary educational institutions and environments that subject them to crime and violence. The current study supports the previous research findings: Black men in this study, from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, reported being exposed to life-threatening social disorders that affected their educational achievement and attainment.

In the present study, participants' median income was approximately \$32,000¹⁴, with nearly 40% of the families meeting the poverty threshold and 56% of the men coming from single parent households. In regard to parental level of education, 30.4% of the participants' mothers earned an associate or bachelor's degree, while the highest level of education achieved by 12 (52.1%) mothers was a high school diploma, and four (17.3%) earned less than a secondary education. The father of one participant attained a master's degree, while the majority of fathers ($n = 14$) completed high school or its equivalent and one did not. It should be noted that three participants did not even know their fathers and thus were unable to provide their education information. Furthermore, none of the participants came from households in which both parents earned a college degree. Given these educational and social-class backgrounds, it is not surprising that some respondents reported the impact that illegal drugs had on their attainment. Some even admitted to being involved in the sale of illegal narcotics while attending college, while others talked about how, during their enrollment in college, their fathers were incarcerated due to selling drugs.

Five participants in this study reported being robbed at gunpoint while enrolled at WSU. These men stated that they were emotionally shattered after having guns placed in their mouths and at their temples. One participant, who was violently robbed at gunpoint, stated that his

¹⁴ WSU is located in a State with a median family income over \$50,000.

assailant, “Tried to pull the trigger, but it jammed [twice].” Participants reported that experiences with drugs and violence left them unable to focus on their academics. One participant shared that he stopped attending class and began to carry a gun.

To give context to this disheartening story, critical race theorists have asserted that socioeconomic disparities significantly impact the educational attainment of minority students on all levels, as compared to White students from more affluent backgrounds (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Massey, 2006; Savas, 2014). Black men in this study deemed their resource-deficient communities as detrimental to their collegiate academic preparation. Participants discussed pre-college experiences such as lack of social capital, limited Black male college trailblazers, failing schools, and poor performance on standardized testing. Clearly, they were frustrated with the lack of the resources associated with their communities stating, “We do not have certain resources that other students have.” For some, the lack of support and encouragement from community members, including school personnel, was disheartening. By their accounts, the limited social capital of these men hindered their postsecondary experiences and made them feel skeptical about college completion. However, Yosso’s (2005) CRT examination of community cultural wealth (capital) can help to explain how the Black men in this study achieved through perseverance, hard work, and coping skills transmitted by parents despite them having limited access to the networks and resources associated with higher education.

Sharing experiential knowledge: A form of social justice. Critical race theory’s tenet commitment to social justice, helps to explain how marginalized groups resist and respond to oppression, resulting from – as it relates to this study – intersecting identities of race, class, and gender (Harper, 2009a; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995;

Savas, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These responses can be viewed as “liberatory” or transformative, and they often initiate the eradication of marginalization and/or “the empowering of subordinated minority groups” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; p. 26). In response to research question 4, How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?, the findings of this study highlight that Black men serve as liberators and are transformed by sharing experiential knowledge of their paths to achievement, persistence, and attainment.

Similar to the findings in Harper (2013), participants in this study developed peer pedagogy, a methodology utilized by Black students at PWIs to teach other Black students how to develop support networks and navigate racialized campuses. The principal lesson taught by these men within their peer pedagogy was “if I can do it, you can do it;” essentially, telling their stories, inspiring others, and making relative connections. The respondents offered other Black men and minority students--particularly first year students--detailed advice on taking responsibility for their actions and remaining focused on all facets of their education, including business related items, such as financial aid, financial literacy, and the monitoring of academic program plans. Students explained that sharing information about how to succeed in college with anyone who would listen was part of their personal “missions.” They discussed how providing advice represented one component of their peer pedagogy, and that sharing their inspirational stories was equally important. Black men discussed the expectations of college and how hard work was a key to success. They welcomed any opportunities to share their stories. For some men, sharing stories was an extremely personal endeavor, as they courageously disclosed, to strangers, sensitive mental and physical health issues that enlightened peers about what to expect and where to seek help. For example, one participant stated that he consistently provided other

students with advice and motivation while enrolled at WSU. He indicated that he continues to do so as an alumnus and that he has helped others understand the pitfalls and triumphs of college through his lived experience.

Not all participants were successful in implementing their peer pedagogy. In fact, some reported not being able to connect with their Black male peers, while others struggled with feelings of shame and feared being ostracized as a result of the disclosure of personal ordeals. A few Black students were met with resistance. One stated that other Black men, “kind of don't want to hear that,” and that when something was shared there was a sense of being ignored, like, “Talking to the air.” For some men asking for advice or assistance is misconstrued to be a feminine trait that runs counter to socialized masculine values (Harris & Harper, 2008). The fact that some Black men reject being taught or “schooled” by their peers might explain why some participants were reluctant to share advice.

Counter-narratives of successful Black college men.

Most surprising and most disappointing is that nearly every student interviewed said it was the first time someone had sat him down to ask how he successfully navigated his way to and through higher education, what compelled him to be engaged in student organizations and college classrooms, and what he learned that could help improve achievement and engagement among Black male collegians. (Harper, 2012a, p.15)

Extant literature on Black collegiate men has endeavored to give voice to their academic achievements from an anti-deficit approach by documenting how they persist and graduate (Bridges, 2010; Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Palmer & Wood, 2012a; Wood & Williams, 2013). Utilizing the CRT tenet counter narratives as a vehicle, the participants in the current study offered their experiential knowledge as evidence that Black men achieve, persist, and attain. In addition to providing valuable data about the individual

experiences of Black men, Hiraldo (2010) posited that counter stories are useful in providing an analysis of the culture and climate of college campuses.

In this study, successful Black men were asked how they did it. Participants' counter-narratives included accounts of self-determination to attain a degree, as well as supportive networks to explain their academic resilience and attainment at a Hispanic serving institution. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many of the men in this study came from low SES backgrounds. They talked about being persistent and determined to earn a degree as a means to increase their social mobility. Participants credited their parents with instilling strong work ethics and values and a sense of pride in personal accomplishments. Goal realization was a common theme among many of them. They talked about college being a goal above all others that, in order to achieve, meant delaying gratification for material possessions and less attendance and participation at the social aspects of college life such as, parties, excessive drinking, and drug use. In a sense, these men were not only grittier (Strayhorn, 2013a), but they truly appreciated and valued education (Griffin, 2006). The findings of this study indicate that the students were pursuing two separate but interrelated goals through their investment in college; the satisfaction of a sense of accomplishment in spite of disadvantaged circumstances and the promise of higher education.

The determination of participants to earn a college degree was supported by a network of peers and staff who believed in their ability to succeed in college. Despite the risk that threatened their degree attainment, the motivation and encouragement they received from supporters within and external to the university allowed them to achieve their goals via the. Supporters and peers (experiencing identical issues) influence and remind Black men that seeking an education is well worth the struggle.

The literature on Black male college success illustrates the effect that support networks have on the academic persistence of this population (Cuyjet, 1997; Hébert, 2002; Williamson, 2010; Strayhorn, 2008b). Researchers such as Fries-Britt, Burt, and Franklin (2012) and Flowers (2012) found that gifted Black college men in challenging STEM fields succeeded with guidance and encouragement from faculty, staff, and students. The same outcomes were prevalent in Palmer and Strayhorn's (2008) study of 11 academically underprepared men enrolled in an educational support program. Like their STEM major counterparts, a network of inspirational peers and staff buttressed the determination of these men. Similarly, men attending a HSI succeeded via an unwavering self-determination and critical support network.

Collectively, the current study found that Black, male, college completion at a Hispanic serving institution was threatened by internal and external risk factors including lack of academic and social integration, and health challenges (Iarovici, 2014; Kitzrow, 2003; Piorkowski, 1983; Rawson et al., 1994; Smith et al., 2007; Upright et al., 2014), and financial barriers (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Davis et al., 2013; Long & Riley, 2007; Nettles & Perna, 1997; Perna, 2000). Additionally, participants' racialized, gendered, and life-threatening experiences resulted from their intersecting identities of race and gender (Harper, 2009a; Howard, 2008; Massey & Fischer, 2005), and race and class (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Massey, 2006; Savas, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Taken together, these threats to attainment were found to evoke feelings of despair, shame, lowered self-esteem, and ultimately departure.

To combat these varying risk and promote Black male academic resilience, the findings of the present study show that participants selected and used three distinct categories of protection: individual, familial, and socio-environmental level protective factors (Morales & Trotman, 2011; Olsson et al., 2003). Unlike the findings in the study by Reddick et al. (2012),

the present findings suggest that the HSI was a significant socio-environmental level protective factor that consisted of a supportive campus ethos and cultural agents (Butler et al., 2013; Cuyjet, 2006; Museus, 2011; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sutton, 2006). In the current study, Black men were identified as being committed social change agents, serving as liberators sharing experiential knowledge of their paths to achievement, persistence, and attainment through counter narratives (Harper, 2006a, 2009a, 2013; Hiraldo, 2010). These findings inform the Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC), illuminating how Black male collegians experience the process of resilience in the context of their educational attainment at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI); and how this process is influenced by race, gender, and socio-economic status.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study suggest several implications for how the higher education community can foster Black, male, academic resilience. I apply the Black Male Academic Resilience Cycle (BMARC) as the framework to discuss recommendations for practice within each of the three phases of resilience.

BMARC PHASE I: Risk Factor Recognition – Preempting Threats to Attainment

The findings of the present study indicate that study participants encountered threats to college completion that stemmed from deficient academic and social integration. Institutional leaders must look to mitigate these issues through the development of targeted summer bridge programs (SBPs) based upon the success-based research. Kezar (2000), Maton, Hrabowski, and Schmitt (2000), and Strayhorn (2011) found that targeted summer bridge programs curriculums provide historically underrepresented and low socioeconomic status students academic skill development (some offering remediation), study skills training, and engagement opportunities. These initiatives have been found to support achievement and attainment (Cabrera, Miner &

Milem, 2013; Garcia & Paz, 2009). In addition to academic skills enhancement, institutional leaders must design SBPs that underscore the importance of transitioning to college and first-year expectations activities (e.g., financial literacy, responsible social engagement, and interpersonal skills) that are empirically demonstrated to support Black male collegiate success (Kezar, 2000).

Over a quarter of the participants in this study suffered from incurable, yet treatable physical illnesses and a range of mental health conditions that challenged their academic resilience. Kitzrow (2003), Piorkowski (1983), Upright et al. (2014), and Smith et al. (2007) agreed that Black men and underrepresented students are overrepresented in regard to poor health. Many physical ailments lead to poor mental health. However, Black college men are reluctant to seek professional help and medical assistance, particularly counseling, and decline treatment due to lack of trust of cross-cultural counselors (often White) (Williams & Justice, 2010). College counseling and wellness staff must be knowledgeable of ways in which they can encourage Black men to seek treatment, and they should utilize directed outreach efforts. More specifically, institutions should: (a) seek to employ Black male counselors experienced in working with Black men; (b) focus special outreach efforts on Black, male, first year students to create a culture of treatment; (c) form partnerships with the gatekeepers of Black organizations; and, (d) connect with Black men through non-threatening group discussions centered around relevant mental health issues, such as coping strategies, and stress management.

Phase I of the BMARC indicates that racialized and gendered experiences, as well as the impact of socioeconomic status, are detrimental to Black male attainment. The literature points to the unfavorable effect that intersecting, marginalized, social identities have on minority college student academic resilience (Brayboy, 2005; Buenavista et al., 2009; Donner, 2005;

Harper, 2009a; Hiraldo, 2010; Keels, 2013; Liu, 2009; Savas, 2014; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000; Teranishi et al., 2009).

Therefore, it is important that institutional personnel intentionally assess their campus climate to learn how the college environment influences students' diverse experiences, focusing intently on intersectional identities. Working with institutional centers for diversity and equity (if preexisting, if not they should be developed) such data can be utilized to develop "systematic and comprehensive educational programs" (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998, p. 291), cultural competency trainings, and conferences for faculty, staff, and students (Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008). These types of programming are valuable and often contribute to the creation of focused dialogue, community partnerships, and policy, and can influence institutional strategic planning. The aforementioned educational programming also influences safe spaces or inclusive campus environments that are not critical of the Black male collegiate experience and allow for open and honest expression. The lived or internalized racialized experiences that Black males express are often intense and may be misconstrued as aggression. Not only do cultural competency trainings engage the campus in dialogue and a better understanding of the disheartening campus experiences of some Black men, but they teach Black men how to pointedly articulate their experiences while not closing off dialogue via a blaming delivery.

Institutional leaders need to make conscious efforts to create an inclusive environment and implement curriculum transformation initiatives that infuse the study of intersectionality into each academic discipline (Krebs, 2005). Commitment to eradicating the marginalization of all students within an institution on the basis of race, gender, and class engages all campus

stakeholders in a dynamic conversation on the meaning of difference, and creates an inclusive environment where underrepresented groups can succeed academically.

BMARC PHASE II: Protective Factor Selection – Comprehensive Support Programming

Phase II of the BMARC illustrates that Black men attending a HSI mitigated risk to attainment through strong self-efficacy and determinations that were supported by spiritual faith. The results of this study show that many participants set goals, completed tasks, and delayed gratification. These factors were found to promote academic success and degree completion among Black men (Deci et al., 1991; Strayhorn, 2013a). Student affairs educators should create programs that assist Black men with developing SMART (long and short-term) academic and personal/professional development goals. Tracking and assessment of their progress is necessary, along with publicly commending the achievement of these goals.

In addition, spiritual faith has been found to strengthen Black male students determination and self-efficacy. Although faith-based programming on state and community college campuses can at times be contentious, many institutions have chaplains and religious student-affiliated organizations. Religious-based student associations are important outlets for Black males to practice their faith. Organization advisors should familiarize themselves with Black college male faith (Herndon, 2003; Riggins et al., 2008; Watson, 2006; Wood, & Hilton, 2012b) and develop programming accordingly.

Family member support is critical to overcoming barriers to attainment among Black male collegians (Griffin, 2006; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Williamson, 2010; Wilson-Sadberry et al., 1991). Many institutions are proactive in engaging parents and families in the college experience through participation in campus family days, cookouts, sporting events, and thematic socials that link them with the campus community (Williamson, 2010). Student affairs

practitioners should build upon these practices by providing educational workshops and group discussions designed to promote the importance of familial support and its affect on Black men. Black Greek fraternities and sororities and campus-based Black professional organizations should seek to host workshops regarding the experiences of Black men on their respective college campus. While college support is vital, K – 12 educators need to emphasize the value of parents as “educational role models that influence adolescents’ educational goals” (Hayes, 2012, p. 578). Hayes (2012) found that high school students were more academically successful and had better attendance when parents were engaged in home-based academic involvement. This level of parental involvement prior to college enrollment has had positive effects on student academic success at the postsecondary level.

Harper (2006) and other scholars (e.g., Astin, 1993; Flowers, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Robert, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008b) have suggested that peer and faculty support and student support programs have enabled Black men to reach their academic goals. While many of the participants in this study showed notable help seeking tendencies--building resources and accessing support--many did so after experiencing significant academic and social setbacks. Institutional leaders must be proactive when attempting to retain high-risk students, and they should implement campus-wide, academic, early alert systems. These systems have robust features, which alert students, advisors, coaches, and support services personnel to both positive and negative academic performances and engage students via email, web portal and/or social media (Faulconer, Geissler, Majewski & Trifilo, 2014). Implemented and managed efficiently, these systems have real-time capability to link at-risk or underperforming Black men to social and academic support networks and programs, In addition, such systems can encourage students and help to reinforce their efforts with positive motivation. Early alert systems are excellent

communication tools that can be utilized to send targeted messages based on demographic criteria. This can increase the support that university personnel provide to their Black male students.

One overarching theme that emerged from this study is the profound impact of socio-environmental level protective factors on Black male collegiate success. Over 90% of the participants activated this safeguard. I found that networks of peers, Black male success models, faculty, and staff were essential to Black men's persistence. Many of these connections were facilitated through mentoring and support programs. Mentoring programs have recently been touted across the nation as a dynamic, undergraduate, student retention method (Wallace, Abel & Ropers-Huilman, 2000), and it is essential to Black male resilience (Butler et al., 2013; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; LaVant, et al., 1997; Reddick, 2006; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007).

It is imperative that institutional leaders engage in the development of targeted mentoring programs with curriculum focused on members academic, social/cultural, personal, and professional development. Mentoring programs tend to be grassroots in nature, developed by campus cultural agents and students who have identified a need for such intervention. Intentionality is paramount when developing mentoring programs on college campuses; these programs should be launched and resourced under the auspices of executive level departments. Mentoring programs often lose momentum and fail due to a lack of financial and institutional support (Butler et al., 2013). Sustainable programs are often initiatives within offices of diversity, similar to The Ohio State University's Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male, a program of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Given the findings of the current study, development of mentoring initiatives should include family programming and be intricately aligned with institutional SBPs or contain a standalone SBP. Cuyjet (2006) posited

that mentoring programs should be “developmental” in nature and focused on proactive engagement rather than purely “instructional.” Programs such as the Meyerhoff Scholarship Program, Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), and the African American Men of Arizona State University (AAMASU) are some examples of successful mentoring programs (Cuyjet, 2006). These programs are funded, staffed by faculty, staff, and students, and conduct annual program assessments and university-wide, year-end celebrations of member accomplishments.

BMARC PHASE III: Sharing Experiential Knowledge – Providing Outlets for Counter-narratives

Black student unions, Greek lettered fraternities (Harper, 2013), offices of diversity, and mentoring support programs (Cuyjet, 2006) all provide venues for Black college men to discuss their college successes and challenges with other Black students. Findings from this study indicate that the participants contributed to a peer pedagogy whereby they taught and inspired other Black men to succeed. Institutional leaders must not only encourage these dialogues and provide safe spaces for expression, when appropriate, they (inclusive of faculty and staff) should host, attend, listen, and learn about the Black male experience on campus.

Additionally, academic affairs leaders, human resource departments, and centers for teaching and learning should design faculty development and staff training opportunities that include presentations, panel discussions, and roundtables with Black male students and alums. Student participation in faculty and staff development can provide outlets for Black men to share their realities and offer feedback on curriculum and teaching methods. This educates faculty and demonstrates to students that their experiential knowledge is being included in the development of the institution.

Finally, while the research on Black college men is robust, the challenges and strengths of this population differ based on context. Institutional leaders must understand the issues impacting their respective students. Therefore, it is important that institutional research departments develop studies to understand the issues that at-risk students face and how to support their academic success (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998; McLaughlin, Brozovsky, & McLaughlin, 1998). Additionally, institutional research offices play an important role in broadcasting images of successful Black men. These departments should seek to develop campus-based research that celebrates the academic achievement and attainment of Black men on their campuses (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The development of student success profiles, intentionally inclusive of Black men, will assist in enhancing their self-esteem, in addition to highlighting their productivity campus-wide.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study investigated Black male upperclassmen and alumni academic success and college persistence (no more 5 years removed) at a Hispanic serving, 4-year, public university. My goal in conducting this research was to better understand how successful, Black male collegians at a HSI experienced the process of academic resilience, and how race, class, and gender influenced that process. Studies examining Black college men have largely focused on experiences at PWIs (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006a, 2006b; Hébert, 2002; Moore et al., 2003; Museus, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008b; Williamson, 2010), and HBCUs (Flowers, 2012; Fountaine & Carter, 2012; Fries-Britt et al., 2012; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Many researchers reject the monolithic characterization of Black men and the uniformed context in which their experiences are investigated (Cuyjet, 2006; Palmer & Wood, 2012; Strayhorn, 2008a; Wood, Hilton & Lewis, 2012). Studies should focus on Black male experiences at Hispanic serving institutions

(Reddick et al., 2012) and the effect of race, class, and gender on academic resilience (Ford et al., 1996; Harper, 2009a; Morales & Trotman, 2011). As Black male academic underachievement and negative institutional experiences relative to all racial groups, female counterparts, and across institutional settings persist, it is urgent that the factors, processes, and institutional context that contribute to this population's success be better understood. Based on the results of this study, additional future research is warranted to better understand the success experiences of Black men from a range of academic class standings; those who are less successful and from diverse institutional settings. Specific recommendations for future research are as follows:

1. The present study provides thick, rich descriptions of the experiences of Black male upperclassmen, and alumni at a HSI; however, it offers little about the experiences of underclassmen in the same institutional setting. Marks, Carey-Butler, and Mitchell (2012) found that little research existed that examined African American college men from first-year through senior-year. The current study findings show that contact with risk, causing participants to consider departure, was manifest during their first year of enrollment at the institution. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of Black men's resilience experiences, future research should include underclassmen, allowing for cross-examinations of findings based on class status.
2. In MacLeod's (1987), *Ain't No Makin' It*, the researcher endeavored to understand motivated, low SES, Black and White teenagers' formation of career aspirations. Ten years later MacLeod (1997) followed up with the original teens when they were in their mid-twenties only to find the social mobility of the men to be stagnant. Similarly, as part of this study focused on the resilience of enrolled upperclassmen, future research should

be conducted to ascertain if this group reached their ultimate goal of attainment. Data collection for this study was conducted during the 2013 fall semester. During this time the 10 upperclassmen were deemed resilient in relation to the criterion-based sampling for the study and their interview responses. Yet, little is known about the academic struggles and triumphs of this cohort, the impact of the institution, and their intersecting identities relative to their attainment. Follow up studies would be beneficial in garnering those data.

3. This study focused primarily on the intersections of race, class, and gender identities and their impact on academic resilience and attainment. There was not a wealth of masculine-relevant findings in this study (or a focus thereof), which explained participants' resilience and attainment. The influence of masculinity on Black male academic success may merit further research. Research should be conducted to explore the masculinity issues associated with positive help-seeking tendencies (Wimer & Levant, 2011), particularly whether help seeking is being perceived as a feminine trait. Additionally, men in this study experienced significant mental health issues that troubled their achievement and attainment. Hammond (2012) found that Black men experienced higher restrictive emotionality (suppressed emotions), which was related to significant depressive symptoms among college-aged men. Future research, with a focus on Black college men should further examine masculinity to provide a deeper understanding of the Black male experience and what masculinity adds to their experiential knowledge (Harper, 2004; Staples, 1978; Whiting & Lewis, 2008).

4. This study focused exclusively on Black college men who were resilient as a result of their perseverance to remain enrolled despite severe academic and social risk. Much can be gleaned from their responses to threat in comparison to their presumably less-resilient counterparts who withdrew or left college altogether. Additionally, Black men who transfer out as a result of hostile campus environments, high tuition, and lack of academic challenge, could be considered resilient by leaving for a setting conducive to their academic success and goals (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Further research, should examine Black men who transfer to fully understand the resilience of this population.
5. The gap between the bachelor's degree attainment of Black men and women is perplexing. The rate of baccalaureate degree attainment earned by Black women nearly doubled that of men in 2010 (66% vs. 34%), while White and Asian/Pacific Islander men and women degree completion was more evenly distributed (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Scholars have attempted to explain this dismal trend by looking at gender differences in incarceration, SES status, and finances, only to find insignificant variation between genders on these variables (Cohen & Nee, 2000; Keel, 2013). While this study focused on Black male college attainment, future research should be conducted that compares the within group academic resilience experiences and the influence of intersecting identities on success. For example, immigrant experiences, bi-racial Black men, disabled individuals, transgendered with race, gender, and class.
6. An overarching theme identified in Chapter 5 is the considerable impact of socio-environmental level protective factors on Black male success. Black men actively sought out support systems of peers, programs, and faculty to sustain their determination toward

academic attainment. Even among academically high achieving African American men (Cuyjet, 2006; Flowers, 2012; Fries-Britt, 2002) social support was regarded as essential to their continued development and success. Participants in the current study reported that supportive mentors, retention programs, and the mere presence of Black male success models were key to their attainment. In order to advance understanding in this area, further research should be conducted to examine African American male resilience from the perspective of the cultural agents--faculty, peers, staff, and administrators--recognized as success navigators. Future researchers should seek to investigate what mentors and faculty advisors recognize as salient features of their programs and interactions that inspire Black men.

7. Over half ($n=12$) of the participants in this study were admitted to the institution as transfer students. Interestingly, of those 12 students, two transferred from PWIs, while the remaining 10 transferred from HBCUs, Predominately Black Institutions (PBI), or HSIs (seven men transferred from 2-year institutions). Future researcher should focus on the experiences of Black men who transfer from 2-year institutions, and succeed at 4-year institutions. Given that Black males enrolled at 2-year colleges experience subpar academic achievement and attainment as compared to their female counterparts (Pope, 2006; Wood & Hilton, 2012a), those who persist and transfer are resilient. In addition, nearly half (48%) of the 370 HSIs are 2-year colleges (Nunez, Elizondo, & HACU, 2012). Black male success experiences at these institutions should be intentionally investigated in order to provide a varied perspective.

8. In this study, during a discussion on the university's diversity, one participant mentioned that Hispanic students appeared to be more "unified" than African Americans, and that as a race they appeared to be making economic and social advancements ahead of Blacks. While this study did not focus on interracial relations, Reddick et al. (2012) discovered a "tepid" relationship between Black and Latino students at a HSI in Texas. Obviously, racial tensions have been found to exist between racial/ethnic groups. Indeed, inter-minority conflict has been prevalent between Blacks and Hispanics, particularly in regard to allocation of limited resources (MacDonald & Garcia, 2003; Morris, 2000). As the Hispanic population in the US continues to increase and more postsecondary institutions acquire HSI designation, future research should examine the relationships between African Americans and Latinos at HSIs utilizing inter-minority conflict theory (Morris, 2000).

Conclusion

But the plain fact is there are some Americans who, in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society – groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions; groups who've seen fewer opportunities that have spanned generations. And by almost every measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color. Now, to say this is not to deny the enormous strides we've made in closing the opportunity gaps that marred our history for so long. My presence is a testimony to that progress. (Barack Obama, 2014, Remarks by the President on "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative launch, paragraph 11)

These remarks by President Obama echo the fact that notwithstanding seemingly insurmountable odds, Black men do succeed in college. Despite the findings of deficit-oriented research (Harper, 2014) that accentuate the unnerving underrepresentation, academic underachievement, negative institutional experiences, and abysmal degree attainment rates of far

too many men, scholarship chronicling Black male collegiate success does indeed exist. The success-based research has explained that successful Black men display strong self-efficacy, are engaged on their campus and in the classroom, and leverage peers, family members, mentors, and God (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006a, 2009, 2012c; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008a, 2008b; Williamson, 2010).

Departing from the deficit framework, these studies have predominately examined Black men on the campuses of PWIs and HBCUs, and analyzed isolated success factors through hackneyed theoretical concepts. This has left a gap in the literature on Black male collegian's postsecondary experiences. Over two decades ago, Allen (1992) called for research that would illuminate the process of Black college student success that would account for the influence of their marginalized status and impact of campus environment. By conducting this research, my intent was to fill this void by identifying the process of academic resilience experienced by Black men within the context of their intersecting identities of race, class, and gender at a HSI; an underexplored setting (Reddick et al., 2012).

What emerged from this study was a process of academic resilience that highlights how African American men make sense of their educational, social, health related, and financial challenges, as these were juxtaposed with being Black, male, and from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. These men were cognizant that socioeconomic barriers and structural racism informed their marginalized intersecting identities and threatened their attainment. While confrontation with threat presumably thwarted the degree completion dream for non-completers, it fueled the attainment aspirations for those in this study.

Black men in this study were inspired by the prospects of drastically improving their social standing through attainment (Perna, 2005) and desired to prove them (and themselves)

wrong (Moore et al., 2003). Tremendous determination, self-efficacy, and the power of prayer explained the resilience of some Black men, while others were more proactive and displayed help seeking tendencies, such as reaching out to support networks of family and peers. The intentional alignment with likeminded groups and the proactive development of mentor-protégé relationships proved to be essential protective factors that were facilitated by the supportive HBCU like Hispanic serving institution. Successful Black men shared counter narratives with other marginalized students on campus that empowered others while simultaneously solidifying their self-efficacy for the next academic challenge.

This is how they did it. Despite--and in some instances as a result of--the realities of race, class, and gender, these Black men are successful collegians. Their counter-narratives provided in depth insight into how they experienced college success. Their stories reject the historical legacy of injustice, which has for too long defined their educational outcomes. They have proven to be academically resilient and, like President Obama stated, *their* presence is a testimony to progress.

REFERENCES

- Agyemang, K.J.A., & DeLorme, J. (2010). Examining the dearth of black head coaches at the NCAA football bowl subdivision level: A critical race theory and social dominance theory analysis. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 3, 35-52.
- Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 26-44.
- Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G., & Haniff, N. Z. (Eds.). (1991). *College in Black and White*. New York: SUNY Press.
- American Psychological Association. Task force on resilience and strength in Black Children and adolescents. (2008). *Resilience in African American children and adolescents: A vision for optimal development*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/pi/cyf/resilience.html>.
- Anthony, E. J. (1974). The syndrome of the psychologically invulnerable child. In E. J. Anthony & C. Koupernik (Eds.), *The child in his family: Children at psychiatric risk* (pp. 529-545) Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., Wang, X., & Zhang, J. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012 (NCES 2012-045)*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *An introduction to coding and analysis: Qualitative data*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Bamberg, M. (2006). Biographic-narrative research, quo vadis? A critical review of 'big stories' from the perspective of 'small stories'. In K. Milnes, C. Horrocks, N. Kelly, B. Roberts, and D. Robinson, (Eds), *Narrative, memory and knowledge: Representations, aesthetics and contexts*. Huddersfield, England: University of Huddersfield Press.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological review*, 84(2), 191.
- Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo*. Sage Publications Limited.
- Bell, D. (1979). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard LawReview*, 93, 518.
- Bell, D. A. (1987). *And we are not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bell, D. (1992). Political reality testing: 1993. *Fordham Law Review*, 61, 1033.
- Bell, D. (1995) Who's afraid of critical race theory?, *University of Illinois Law Review*, 1995, 893–910.
- Benard, B. (1997). *Turning it around for all youth: From risk to resilience*. Paper presented at the National Resiliency Conference, Global Learning Communities, Launceston, Melbourne, Australia.
- Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1992). *The social construction of reality*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Bertocchi, G., & Dimico, A. (2012). The racial gap in education and the legacy of slavery. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 40, 581-595.

- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bonner, F. A., II. (2010). *Academically gifted African American male college students*. Santa Barber, CA: Praeger.
- Bonner, F.A. (2012). Foreword. In A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood, & C. W. Lewis, (Eds.), *Black males in postsecondary education: examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts*. (p. ix). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Braddock, J. (1991). Bouncing back: Sports and academic resilience among African American males. *Education and Urban Society*, 24(1), 113-131.
- Brayboy, B. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The Urban Review*, 37(5), 425-446.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bridges, E. (2010). Racial identity development and psychological coping strategies of African American males at a predominantly white university. *Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association*, 13(1), 14-26.
- Brown, D. L. (2008). African American resiliency: Examining racial socialization and social support as protective factors. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34(1), 32-48
- Brown, T. N. (2003). Critical race theory speaks to the sociology of mental health: Mental health problems produced by racial stratification. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, (44), 292-301.

- Buenavista, T. L., Jayakumar, U. M., & Misa-Escalante, K. (2009). Contextualizing Asian American education through critical race theory: An example of U.S. Pilipino college student experiences. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, (142), 69-81.
- Burd, S. (2002). Report finds most private colleges out of reach for needy students; lobbyists disagree. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, (January 7).
- Butler, S., Evans, M. P., Brooks, M., Williams, C. R., & Bailey, D. F. (2013). Mentoring African American men during their postsecondary and graduate School experiences: Implications for the counseling profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(4), 419-427
- Cabrera, N., Miner, D., & Milem, J. (2013). Can a summer bridge program impact first year persistence and performance?: A case study of the new start summer program. *Research in Higher Education*, 54(5), 481-498.
- Carroll, G. (1998). *Environmental stress and African Americans: The other side of the moon*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Carter, D. J. (2008b). Cultivating a critical race consciousness for African American school success. *Educational Foundations*, 22, 11-28.
- Carter, S. M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17, 1316-1328.
- Castro, V., Garcia, E. E., Cavazos, J., & Castro, A. Y. (2011). The road to doctoral success and beyond. *The International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 6, 51-77.

- Cavazos, J., Javier, Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G., Castro, V., & Vela, L. (2010). A Qualitative Study of Resilient Latina/o College Students. *Journal of Latinos & Education, 9*(3), 172-188.
- Chapman, T. (2007). Interrogating classroom relationships and events: Using portraiture and critical race theory in education research. *Educational Researcher, 36*(3), 156.
- Chen, R., & DesJardins, S. L. (2010). Investigating the impact of financial aid on student dropout risks: Racial and ethnic differences. *The Journal of Higher Education, 81*(2), 179-208.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions. In D. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35-75). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Clark, M. R. (2005). Negotiating the freshman year: Challenges and strategies among first-year college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(3), 296-316.
- Cohen, C. J. & Nee, C. E. (2000). Educational attainment and sex differentials in African American communities. *American Behavioral Scientist, 43*(7), 1159–1206.
- Coleman, M., Chapman, S., & Wang, D. C. (2013). An examination of color-blind racism and race-related stress among African American undergraduate students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 39*(5), 486-504.
- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.

- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). Narrative and education. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 1(1), 73-85.
- Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). Narrative understandings of teacher knowledge. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 15(4), 315-331.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Crisp, G. & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525-545.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Cuyjet, M. J. (1997). African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college* (pp. 5–16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Cuyjet, M. J. (Ed.). (1997). *African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cuyjet, M.J. (Ed.). (2006). *African American men in college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narratives in social science research*. London, England: Sage.
- Davis, J. E. (1994). College in black and white: campus environment and academic achievement of African American males. *Journal of Negro Education*, 63, 620-633.
- Davis, J. E. (2003). Early schooling and academic achievement of African American males. *Urban Education*, 38(5), 515-537.

- Davis, T. (2002). Voices of gender role conflict: The social construction of college men's identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(4), 508–521.
- Davis, R. J., Nagle, B., Richards, D. A., & Awokoya, J. T. (2013). The impact of the Gates millennium scholars program on college choice for high-achieving, low-income African American students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 82*(3), 226-242.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227-268.
- Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist, 26*(3-4), 325-346.
- DeCuir, J. T. & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: an introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Donnor, J.K. 2005. Towards an interest-convergence in the education of African American football student-athletes in major college sports. *Race, Ethnicity and Education 8*(1), 45–67.
- Dudziak, M. L. (2000). *Cold war civil rights: Race and the image of American democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Earvolino-Ramirez, M. (2007). Resilience: A concept analysis. *Nursing Forum, 42*(2), 73 82.

- Ellett, J. (2011). Narrative and phenomenology as methodology for understanding persistence in art teachers: A reflective journey. *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*, 1(2), 1-14.
- Ellis, C. M. (2002). Examining the pitfalls facing African American males. In L. Jones (Ed.), *Making it on broken promises: African American male scholars confront the culture of higher education* (pp. 61-78). Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2002.
- Eubanks, R. L. (2004). The transition of African American women on public assistance to economic self-sufficiency: A qualitative study of resiliency. (Doctoral dissertation, Seton Hall University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65, 2080.
- Faulconer, J., Geissler, J., Majewski, D., & Trifilo, J. (2014). Adoption of an early-alert system to support university student success. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 80(2), 45-48.
- Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges and universities*. New York: Routledge.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Finlay, L. (2002). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12(4), 531-545.
- Fleming, J. (1981). Stress and satisfaction in college years of Black students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 50, 307-318.
- Fleming, J. (1984). *Blacks in college: A comparative study of students' success in Black and White institutions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Floyd, C. (1996). Achieving despite the odds: A study of resilience among a group of African American high school students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 65, 181-189.

- Flowers, A.M. (2012). Academically gifted black male undergraduates in engineering: Perceptions of factors contributing to their success in a historically black college and university. In R. Palmer, & J. L. Wood, (Eds.), *Black men in college: Implications for HBCU's and beyond* (pp. 163-175). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Flowers, L. A. (2005). Retaining African-American students in higher education: An integrative review. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 6, 23-35.
- Ford, C. A., Kokjie, F.F., & Lewis, M.K. (1996). Factors that Contribute to Academic resilience among urban "at risk" African American male college students. *Challenge: A Journal of Research on African American Men*, 7(3), 17-29.
- Ford, C. L. & Airhihenbuwa, C. O. (2010). Critical Race Theory, Race Equity, and Public Health: Toward Antiracism Praxis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(S1), S30 S35.
- Fordham, S. & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'." *The Urban Review*, 18(3), 176-206.
- Fountaine, T.P. & Carter, J. (2012). "Yes, I can!" Strengths-based approaches for engaging and empowering academically underprepared black men. In R. Palmer, & J. L. Wood, (Eds.), *Black men in college: Implications for HBCU's and beyond* (pp. 41-56). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Frierson, H. T., Pearson Jr. W., & Wyche, J. H. (2009). *Black American males in higher education: Diminishing proportions*. Bingley, UK: Emerald.

- Fries-Britt, S. (1997). Identifying and supporting gifted African American men. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college* (pp. 5-16). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fries-Britt, S. (2002, July/August). High achieving black collegians. *About Campus Magazine*, 7(3), 2-8.
- Fries-Britt, S., Burt, B.A., & Franklin, K. (2012). Establishing Critical Relationships: How Black males persist in physics at HBCUs. In R. Palmer, & J. L. Wood, (Eds.), *Black men in college: Implications for HBCU's and beyond* (pp. 71-88). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and a White campus. *Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 315-30.
- Gainen, J. (1995). Barriers to success in quantitative gatekeeper courses. In R. J. Menges & M.D. Svinicki (Eds.), *Fostering student success in quantitative gateway courses* (Vol. 61, pp. 5-14). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ganga, D. & Scott, S. (2006). Cultural "insiders" and the issue of positionality in qualitative migration research: Moving "across" and moving "along" researcher participant divides. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(3).
- Garcia, L. D. & Paz, C. C. (2009). Evaluation of summer bridge programs. *About Campus*, 14(4), 30-32.
- Garibaldi, A. M. (2007). The educational status of African American males in the 21st century. *Journal of Negro Education*, 76(3), 324-333.
- Garnezy, N. (1974). The study of competence in children at risk for severe psychopathology. In E. J. Anthony & C. Koupernik (Eds.), *The child in his family: Vol. 3. Children at psychiatric risk* (pp. 77-97). New York: Wiley.

- Garnezy, N. (1991, March/April). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 4(34), 416–430.
- Garnezy, N. & Rutter, M. (1983). *Stress, coping, and development in children*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gasman, M. (2008). Minority-serving institutions: The path to successfully educating students of color. *Lumina Foundation for Education Report Series*. Retrieved from: http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Minority_Serving_Institutions.pdf
- Grant, C. A., & Sleeter, C. E. (1986). Race, class, and gender in education research: An argument for integrative analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(2), 195-211.
- Grier-Reed, T., Madyun, N. H., & Buckley, C. G. (2008). Low Black student retention on a predominantly white campus: Two faculty respond with the African American student network. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(5), 476-485.
- Griffin, K. (2006). Striving for success: A qualitative exploration of competing theories of high achieving Black college students' academic motivation. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 384-400.
- Griffin, K. A., Jayakumar, U. M., Jones, M. M., & Allen, W. R. (2010). Ebony in the ivory tower: Examining trends in the socioeconomic status, achievement, and self-concept of black, male freshmen. *Equity & Excellence In Education*, 43(2), 232-248.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ Annual review paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, 75-91.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

- Guiffrida, D. (2005). To break away or strengthen ties to Home: A complex issue for African American college students attending a predominantly white institution. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 38*(1), 49-60.
- Guinier, L., Fine, M., Balin, J., Bartow, A., & Stachel, D. L. (1994). Becoming gentlemen: Women's experiences at one Ivy League law school. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 1*-110.
- Hall, R. E. & Rowan, G. T. (2000). African American males in higher education: A descriptive/qualitative analysis. *Journal of African American Men, 5*(3), 3–14.
- Hammersley, M. (1989). *The dilemma of qualitative method: Herbert Blumer and the Chicago tradition*. London, England: Routledge.
- Hammond, W. P. (2012). Taking it like a man: Masculine role norms as moderators of the racial discrimination–depressive symptoms association among African American men. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*(S2), S232-S241.
- Hardin, M., & Whiteside, E. E. (2009). The power of “small stories:” Narratives and notions of gender equality in conversations about sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 26*(2), 255–276.
- Harper, S. R. (2004). The measure of a man: Conceptualizations of masculinity among high achieving African American male college students. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 48*(1) 89-107.
- Harper, S. R. (2006a). Peer support for African American male college achievement: Beyond internalized racism and the burden of "acting White." *Journal of Men's Studies, 14*(3), 337-358.

- Harper, S. R. (2006b). *Black male students at public universities in the U.S.: Status, trends and implications for policy and practice*. Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.
- Harper, S. R. (2009a). Niggers no more: A critical race counter narrative on Black male student achievement at predominantly White colleges and universities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 22(6), 697-712
- Harper, S. R. (2009b). Race, interest convergence, and transfer outcomes for Black male student athletes. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (147), 29-37.
- Harper, S. R. (2012a). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the national Black male college achievement study*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.
- Harper, S. R. (2012b). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *Review of Higher Education*, 36, 9-29
- Harper, S. R. (2013). Am I my brother's teacher? Black undergraduates, racial socialization, and peer pedagogies in predominantly white postsecondary contexts. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 183-211.
- Harper, S. R. (2014). (Re)setting the agenda for college men of color: Lessons learned from a 15 year movement to improve Black male student success. In R. A. Williams (Ed.), *Men of color in higher education: New foundations for developing models for success* (pp. 116 - 143). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Harper, S. R. & Davis, C. H. F., III. (2012). They (don't) care about education: A counter narrative on Black male students' responses to inequitable schooling. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 26(1/2), 103-120.

- Harper, S. R. & Gasman, M. (2008). Consequences of Conservatism: Black male undergraduates and the politics of historically Black colleges and universities. *Journal of Negro Education*, 77(4), 336-351.
- Harper, S. R. & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, (120), 7-24.
- Harper, S. R. & Kuykendall, J. A. (2012). Institutional efforts to improve Black male student achievement: A standards-based approach. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 44(2), 23-29.
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106, 1707.
- Harris, F. & Harper, S. R. (2008). Masculinities go to community college: Understanding male identity socialization and gender role conflict. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2008(142), 25-35.
- Hausmann, L. R., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and White first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(7), 803-839.
- Hayes, D. (2012). Parental involvement and achievement outcomes in African American adolescents. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(4), 567-582.
- Hébert, T. P. (2002). Gifted Black males in a predominantly White university: Portraits of high achievement. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 26(1), 25-64.
- Henretta, J. C., Wolf, D. A., Van Voorhis, M. F., & Soldo, B. J. (2012). Family structure and the reproduction of inequality: Parents' contribution to children's college costs. *Social Science Research*, 41(4), 876-887.

- Herndon, M. K. (2003). Expressions of spirituality among African-American college males. *Journal of Men's Studies, 12*(1), 75-84.
- Herndon, M. K., & Hirt, J. B. (2004). Black students and their families: What leads to success in college. *Journal of Black Studies, 34*(4), 489-513.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Levy, P. (2006). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hilton, A. A., Wood, J. L., & Lewis, C. W. (Eds.). (2012). *Black males in postsecondary education: Examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Hiraldo, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection, 31*, 53-59.
- Hispanic Associations of Colleges and Universities (HACU). (2013). *Hispanic higher education and hsi factsheet*. Retrieved from: http://www.hacu.net/images/hacu/OPAI/2013_HSI_FactSheet.030613.pdf. April 10, 2013.
- Horn, L. J., & Chen, X. (1998). Toward resiliency: At-risk students who make it to college. (Report No. PLLI 98-8056). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Howard, T. (2008). Who really cares? The disenfranchisement of African American males in preK-12 schools: A critical race theory perspective. *The Teachers College Record, 110*(5), 954-985.
- Howell, C. L. (2004). Resilience in adult women students: Facilitating academic achievement and persistence. *The Researcher, 18*(1), 34-43.

- Hsieh, H. F. & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288.
- Hubbard, S. M. & Stage, F. K. (2009). Attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of faculty at Hispanic serving and predominantly Black institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(3) 270-289.
- Hurtado, S. (1992). The campus racial climate: Contexts of conflict. *Journal of Higher Education, 63*, 539-569.
- Hurtado, S., Carter, D. F., & Kardia, D. (1998). The climate for diversity: Key issues for institutional self-study. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 1998*(98), 53-63.
- Hurtado, S., Carter, D. F., & Spuler, A. (1996). Latino student transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education, 37*(2), 135-157.
- Hurtado, S., Griffin, K. A., Arellano, L., & Cuellar, M. (2008). Assessing the value of climate assessments: Progress and future directions. *Journal of Diversity In Higher Education, 1*(4), 204-221.
- Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A., & Allen, W. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *Review of Higher Education, 21*, 279-302.
- Hurtado, S. & Saenz, V. (2006). Realizing the potential of Hispanic-serving institutions: Multiple dimensions of institutional diversity for advancing Hispanic higher education. *Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Hispanic Higher Education Research Collective Conference*, Los Angeles, CA.

- Iarovici, D. (2014). *Mental health issues and the university student*. Baltimore, Maryland: JHU Press.
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (n.d.). *Glossary*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/?charindex=H>. April 9, 2013.
- Jackman, M. R. & Jackman, R. W. (1985). *Class awareness in the United States* (Vol. 343). Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Jackson, J. F. L., & Moore, J. L. I., II. (2008). Introduction: The African American male crisis in education: A popular media infatuation or needed public policy response? *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(7), 847-853.
- Jacelon, C. S. (1997). The trait and process of resilience. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 25(1), 123-129.
- Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505-532.
- Jain, D. (2009). Critical race theory and community colleges: Through the eyes of women student leaders of color. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 34(1-2), 78-91.
- JBHE. (2012). Tracking graduation rates at HBCUs. *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. retrieved from: <http://www.jbhe.com/2012/01/trackinggraduation-ratesathbcus/>
- Jenkins, T. S. (2006). Mr. nigger: The challenges of educating Black males within American society. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(1), 127-155.

- Johnson-Bailey, J. (2004). Enjoining positionality and power in narrative work: Balancing contentious and modulating forces. In S. D., Lapan & K. B. DeMarrais (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 123-138). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Joseph, D. L. & Newman, D. A. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integrative meta analysis and cascading model. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95(1), 54–78
- Kaufman, J. C., Agars, M. D., & Lopez-Wagner, M. C. (2008). The role of personality and motivation in predicting early college academic success in non-traditional students at a Hispanic-serving institution. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 18(4), 492-496.
- Keels, M. (2013). Getting Them Enrolled Is Only Half the Battle: College Success as a Function of Race or Ethnicity, Gender, and Class. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 83(2pt3), 310-322.
- Kezar, A. (2001). Summer bridge programs: Supporting all students. ERIC digest. <http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-1/summer.html> (last accessed, March 2011).
- Kitano, M. K. & Lewis, R. B. (2005). Resilience and coping: Implications for gifted children and youth at risk. *Roeper Review*, 27(4), 200.
- Kitzrow, M. A. (2003). The mental health needs of today's college students: Challenges and recommendations. *NASPA Journal*, 41(1), 167-181.
- Kramp, M. K. (2004). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry. In S. D., Lapan & K. B. DeMarrais (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences* (pp. 103-121). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Krebs, P. (2005). Infusing race, gender, and class into the curriculum at Wheaton College. *On Campus with Women* 34 (1), 2-4.

- Kumpfer, K. L. (2002). Factors and processes contributing to resilience. *Resilience and Development*, 179-224.
- Kunjufu, J. (2001). *State of emergency: We must save African American males*. Chicago, IL: African American Images.
- Laden, B. V. (2001). Hispanic-serving institutions: Myths and Realities. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(1), 73-92.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate, W.F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97 (1), 47-68.
- LaVant, B. D., Anderson, J. L., & Tiggs, J. W. (1997). Retaining African American men through mentoring initiatives. *New Directions for Student Services*, 1997(80), 43-53.
- Li, X. & Carroll, C. D. (2007). Characteristics of minority-serving institutions and minority undergraduates enrolled in these institutions: Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Report. *National Center for Education Statistics*. (NCES 2008-156).
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Readings, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 1986(30), 73-84.
- Lindsay, G. M. (2006). Experiencing nursing education research: Narrative inquiry and interpretive phenomenology. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(4), 30.

- Lindsey, R., Reed, S., Lyons, R., Hendricks, D., Mead, A., & Butler, K. L. (2011). Sources of stress among gender and classification for African American college students. *College Student Journal, 45*(4), 749-757.
- Long, B. T. & Riley, E. K. (2007). Financial aid: A broken bridge to college access? *Harvard Educational Review, 77*(1), 39–63
- Liu, A. (2009). Critical race theory, Asian Americans, and higher education: A review of research. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education & Information Studies, 5*(2), 1.
- Luthar, S. S. (2003). *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Luthar, S. S. (2006). Resilience in development: A synthesis of research across five decades. In D. Cicchetti and D. J. Cohen, (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology. Volume 3. Risk, disorder, and adaptation (2nd ed.)*. New York, Wiley and Sons.
- Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543-562.
- Lynn, M. & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U.S. schools. *Urban Review, 38*(4), 257-290.
- MacDonald, V. M., & Garcia, T. (2003). Historical perspectives on Latino access to higher education, 1848–1990. In J. Castellanos & L. Jones (Eds.), *The majority in the minority: Expanding the representation of Latina/o faculty, administrators and students in higher education* (pp. 15-46). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Macleod, J. (1995). *Ain't no makin' it: Aspirations and attainment in a low-income neighborhood* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Westview Press.

- Majors, R. & Billson, J. (1992). *Cool pose: The dilemmas of Black manhood in America*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Manns, W. (1997). Supportive roles of significant others in African American families. In H.P. McAdoo (Ed.), *Black families* (pp. 198-213). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Marks, D.T., Carey-Butler, S., & Mitchell, K. (2012). Black males at not-for-profit private colleges and universities. In A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood & C. W. Lewis, (Eds.), *Black males in postsecondary education: Examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts* (pp. 151 – 182). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954.
- Massey, D. S. (2006). Social background and academic performance differentials: White and minority students at selective colleges. *American Law and Economics Review*, 8(2), 390-409.
- Massey, D.S. & Fischer, M. J., (2005). Stereotype threat and academic performance. New findings from a racially diverse sample of college freshmen. *DuBois Review*, 2(1), 45–68.
- Masten, A.S. & Gewirtz, A.H. (2006). Resilience in development: The importance of early childhood. In Tremblay R.E., Barr R.G., Peters R.De.V. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development* [online]. Montreal, Quebec: Center of Excellence for Early Childhood Development; 2006:1-6. Available at: <http://www.excellenceearlychildhood.ca/documents/Masten-GewirtzANGxp.pdf>. Accessed January 8, 2012.
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.

- Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development & Psychopathology*, 2(4), 425.
- Masten, A. S., Herbers, J. E., Cutuli, J. J., & Lafavor, T. L. (2008). Promoting competence and resilience in the school context. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(2), 76-84.
- Maton, K. I., Hrabowski, F. A., & Schmitt, C. L. (2000). African American college students excelling in the sciences: College and post college outcomes in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 37(7), 629-654.
- Matsuda, M. J., (1991). Voices of America: Accent, antidiscrimination law, and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100, 1329
- Matsuda, M. J., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. (1993). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the first amendment*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Mauer, M. & King, R. (2007). *Uneven justice: State rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.
- McLaughlin, G. W., Brozovsky, P. V., & McLaughlin, J. S. (1998). Changing perspectives on student retention: A role for institutional research. *Research in Higher Education*, 39(1), 1-17.
- Merisotis, J. P., & McCarthy, K. (2005). Retention and student success at minority serving institutions. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2005(125), 45-58.
- Messer, K.L. (2006). African American male college athletes. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college* (pp. 154-173). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Miller, D. B. & MacIntosh, R. (1999). Promoting resilience in urban African American adolescents: Racial socialization and identity as protective factors. *Social Work Research, 23*(3), 159-169.
- Moore, J. L. I., II, Madison-Colomore, O., & Smith, D. M. (2003). The prove-them wrong syndrome: Voices from unheard African-American males in engineering disciplines. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 12*(1), 61-73.
- Morales, E. E. (2008). Academic resilience in retrospect: Following up a decade later. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7*, 228-248.
- Morales, E. E. (2010). Linking strengths: Identifying and exploring protective factor clusters in academically resilient low-socioeconomic urban students of color. *Roeper Review, 32*(3), 164-175.
- Morales, E. E., & Troutman, F. K. (2004). *Promoting academic resilience in multicultural America: Factors affecting student success*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Morales, E. E., & Trotman, F. K. (2011). *A focus on hope: Fifty resilient students speak*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Morris, I. L. (2000). African American voting on Proposition 187: Rethinking the prevalence of interminority conflict. *Political Research Quarterly, 53*(1), 77-98.
- Murphy, L. B., & Moriarty, A. E. (1976). *Vulnerability, coping and growth from infancy to adolescence*. Oxford, England: Yale U Press.
- Museus, S. D. (2012). Generating Ethnic Minority Student Success (GEMS): A qualitative analysis of high-performing institutions: Correction to Museus. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 5*(2), 77-77.

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2010). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic minorities*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Nelson Laird, T. F., Bridges, B. K., Morelon-Quainoo, C. L., Williams, J. M., & Holmes, M. S. (2007). African American and Hispanic student engagement at minority serving and predominantly White institutions. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*(1), 39-56.
- Nettles, M. T. (1998). *Toward Black undergraduate student equality in American higher education*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Nettles, M. & Perna, L. W. (1997). *The African American education data book Volume 1: Higher and adult education*. Fairfax, VA: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute of the College Fund/UNCF.
- Neville, H. A., Heppner, P. P., Ji, P., & Thye, R. (2004). The relations among general and race related stressors and psychoeducational adjustment in Black students attending predominantly White institutions. *Journal of Black Studies, 34*(4), 599-618.
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education, 38*(4), 431-459.
- Núñez, A., & Elizondo, D. (2012, July). Hispanic-serving institutions in the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico: Organizational characteristics, institutional financial context, and graduation outcomes. Retrieved August 2013 from: http://www.hacu.net/images/hacu/OPAI/H3ERC/2012_papers/Nunez%20elizondo%20%204yr%20hsi%20characteristics%20-%202012.pdf.

- Obama, B. (2014, February, 27). *Remarks by the President on "My Brother's Keeper" initiative*. Retrieved from: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/thewhitehouse/2014/02/27/remarks-president-my-brothers-keeper-initiative>.
- Ogbu, J. U. & Simons, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: a cultural ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 155-188.
- Ollerenshaw, J. A. & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), 329-347.
- Olsson, C. A., Bond, L., Burns, J. M., Vella-Brodrick, D. A., & Sawyer, S. M. (2003). Adolescent resilience: A concept analysis. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26(1), 1-11.
- Oyserman, D., Gant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African American identity: Possible selves and school persistence. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 69(6), 1216-1232.
- Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., & Hilton, A. A. (2009). Exploring challenges that threaten to impede the academic success of academically underprepared Black males at an HBCU. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(4), 429-445.
- Palmer, R. T., Davis, R. J., Moore, J.L. & Hilton, A. A. (2010). A nation at risk: Increasing college participation and persistence among African American males to stimulate U.S. global competitiveness. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, April/May 2010.1(2)105-124.
- Palmer, R. T. & Strayhorn, T. L. (2008). Mastering one's own fate: Non-cognitive factors associated with the success of African American males at an HBCU. *NASPA*, 11(1), 126-143.

- Palmer, R.T. & Wood, J.L. (2012a). *Black men in college: Implications for HBCUs and beyond*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Palmer, R.T. & Wood, J.L. (2012b). Setting the foundation for black men in colleges: Implications for historically Black colleges and universities and beyond. In R. Palmer & J. L. Wood, (Eds.), *Black men in college: Implications for HBCU's and beyond* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Parker, L. & Villalpando, O. (2007). A race(cialized) perspective on education leadership: Critical race theory in educational administration. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 43(5), 519-524
- Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Patton, L. D., McEwen, M., Rendón, L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2007). Critical race perspectives on theory in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2007(120), 39-53.
- Paulsen, M. B. & St John, E. P. (2002). Social class and college costs: Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(2), 189-236.
- Perna, L. W. (2000). Difference in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. *Journal of Higher Education*, 71(2), 117-141.
- Perna, L. W. (2005). The benefits of higher education: Sex, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic group differences. *The Review of Higher Education*, 29(1), 23-52.

- Perna, L. W., & Thomas, S. L. (2006). *A framework for reducing the college success gap and promoting success for all*. Washington, DC: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.
- Person, D.R. & LeNoir, K. (1997). Retention issues and models for African American male athletes. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *Helping African American men succeed in college*, (pp. 79-91). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Phinney, J. S. & Haas, K. (2003). The process of coping among ethnic minority first generation college freshmen: A narrative approach. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 143*(6), 707-726.
- Pike, G. R., & Kuh, G. D. (2005). First-and second-generation college students: A comparison of their engagement and intellectual development. *Journal of Higher Education, 76*(3), 276-300.
- Piorkowski, G. K. (1983). Survivor guilt in the university setting. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 61*(10), 620-622.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R.S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). New York: Plenum Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. Amos Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 3-25). London, England: Falmer Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(4), 471-486.

- Pope, R. L. (1998) The relationship between psychosocial development and racial identity development of Black college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39, 273–282.
- Purdy, D. A., Eitzen, D. S., & Hufnagel, R. (1982). Are athletes also students? The educational attainment of college athletes. *Social Problems*, 29 439-448.
- Rawson, H. E., Bloomer, K., & Kendall, A. (1994). Stress, anxiety, depression, and physical illness in college students. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 155(3), 321-330.
- Reddick, R. J. (2006). The gift that keeps giving: Historically Black college and university educated scholars and their mentoring at predominantly White institutions. *Educational Foundations*, 20(1–2), 61–84.
- Reddick, R.J., Heilig, J.V., & Valdez, P.L. (2012). Bridging a black-brown divide? Black male students at a Hispanic serving institution. In A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood, & C. W. Lewis, (Eds.), *Black males in postsecondary education: Examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts* (pp. 183-207). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Reid, K. W. (2013). Understanding the relationships among racial identity, self-efficacy, institutional integration and academic achievement of Black males attending research universities. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 82(1), 75-93.
- Reynolds, R. (2010). “They think you’re lazy,” and other messages Black parents send their Black sons: An exploration of critical race theory in the examination of educational outcomes for Black males. *Journal of African American Males in Education*. 1(2), 144–163.
- Richardson, G. E. (2002). The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58(3), 307-321.

- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis* (Vol. 30). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Riessman, C. K. (2004). Narrative analysis. In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. Futing Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods* (pp. 705–709). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Riggins, R. K., McNeal, C., & Herndon, M. K. (2008). The role of spirituality among African American college males attending a historically Black university. *College Student Journal*, 42(1), 70-81.
- Robert, T. (2008). “It takes a village to raise a child”: The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a Black college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(1), 52-70.
- Rutter, M. (1979). Protective factors in children's responses to stress and disadvantage. *Annals of the Academy of Medicine*, 8(3), 324.
- Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 147, 598-611.
- Rutter, M. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(3), 316-331.
- Rutter, M. (2006). Implications of resilience concepts for scientific understanding. *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*. 1094, 1–12
- Rutter, M. (2012). Resilience as a dynamic concept. *Development and Psychopathology*, 24(02), 335-344.
- Rutter, M. & Sroufe, L. A. (2000). Developmental psychopathology: Concepts and challenges. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12, 265–296.

- Sandelowski, M. (1991). Telling stories: Narrative approaches in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 23(3), 161-166.
- Santiago, D., Andrade, S. & Brown, S. (2004). Latino student success at Hispanic-serving institutions. U.S. Department of Education (Grant No. P116U030001). Retrieved from: http://former.ous.edu/state_board/workgroups/edp/files/LatinoStudentSuccessatHispaniServingInstitutions2-15.pdf.
- Savas, G. (2014). Understanding critical race theory as a framework in higher educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 35(4), 506-522.
- Schnoebelen, A. (2013, March 25). Why one university chose to become a Hispanic serving institution. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Why-One-University-Became-a/138105/>.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Sheu, H. B. & Sedlacek, W. E. (2004). An exploratory study of help-seeking attitudes and coping strategies among college students by race and gender. *Measurement & Evaluation in Counseling & Development (American Counseling Association)*, 37(3), 130-143.
- Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). Assume the position...you fit the description. Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 51(4), 551-578.
- Solórzano, D. G. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and latercrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308.

- Solórzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. J. (2000, Winter). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60–73.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban Education*, (3), 308-342.
- Solorzano, D., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of minority students in higher education. In C. Torres & T. Mitchell (Eds.), *Emerging issues in the sociology of education: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 211-224). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Solórzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23.
- Staples, R. (1978). Masculinity and race: The dual dilemma of Black men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34(1), 169-183.
- Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African-Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62(1), 26-37.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2008a). The invisible man: Factors affecting the retention of low income African American males. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal*, 11(1), 66-87.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2008b). Fittin' in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging for Black men at predominantly white institutions? *NASPA Journal (Online)*, 45(4), 501-527.

- Strayhorn, T. L. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *Review of Higher Education, 33*(3), 307-332.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2011). Bridging the pipeline: Increasing underrepresented students' preparation for college through a summer bridge program. *American Behavioral Scientist, 55*(2), 142-159.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2013a). What role does grit play in the academic success of Black male collegians at predominantly White institutions?. *Journal of African American Studies, 1*, 10.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2013b). *Living at the intersections: Social identities and black collegians*. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Strayhorn, T. L. & Scott, J. A. (2012). Coming out of the dark: Black gay men's experiences at historically Black colleges and universities. In R. Palmer, & J. L. Wood, (Eds.), *Black men in college: Implications for HBCU's and beyond*, 26-40.
- Strayhorn, T. L. & Terrell, M. C. (2007). Mentoring and satisfaction with college for Black students. *The Negro Educational Review, 58*(1-2), 69-83.
- Sutton, E. M. (2006). Developmental mentoring of African American college men. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college*, (95-111). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Taylor, E. (1998). A primer on critical race theory: Who are the critical race theorists and what are they saying? *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 19*, 122-124.

- Taylor, E. (2000). Critical race theory and interest convergence in the backlash against Affirmative Action: Washington State and Initiative 200. *Teachers College Record*, 102(3), 539-560.
- Taylor, H. & Reyes, H. (2012). Self-efficacy and resilience in baccalaureate nursing students. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 9(1), 1-13.
- Taylor, R. D. & Wang, M. C. (2000). *Resilience across contexts: Family, work, culture, and community*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Teranishi, R. T., Behringer, L. B., Grey, E. A., & Parker, T. L. (2009). Critical race theory and research on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in higher education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2009(142), 57.
- Terenzini, P. T., Rendon, L. I., Upcraft, M. L., Millar, S. B., Allison, K. W., Gregg, P. L., & Jalomo, R. (1994). The transition to college: Diverse students, diverse stories. *Research in Higher Education*, 35(1), 57-73.
- Tinto, V. (1988). Stages of student departure: Reflections in the longitudinal character of student leaving. *Journal of Higher Education*, 59(4), 438-455
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Toldson, I. A. (2008). *Breaking barriers: Plotting the path to academic success for school age African-American males*. Washington, DC: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.
- Ungar, M. (2008). Resilience across cultures. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(2), 218-235.

- Upright, P., Esslinger, T., & Hays, W. (2014). Health issues affecting college student's academic performance. *Kentucky Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 51(2), 30-36.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *Social, economic, and housing statistics division: Poverty*. Retrieved from: www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2008). *Characteristics of minority-serving institutions and minority undergraduates enrolled in these institutions* (NCES 2008-156). Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *Integrated postsecondary education data system* (Computer file). Washington, DC: IPEDS.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *The condition of education 2012* (NCES 2012-045). Washington, DC: Author.
- Vaught, S. E., & Castagno, A. E. (2008). "I don't think I'm a racist": Critical race theory, teacher attitudes, and structural racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 11(2), 95-113.
- Walker, C., Gleaves, A., & Grey, J. (2006). Can students within higher education learn to be resilient and, educationally speaking, does it matter? *Educational Studies*, 32(3), 251-264.
- Wallace, D., Abel, R., & Ropers-Huilman, B. (2000). Clearing a path for success: Deconstructing borders through undergraduate mentoring. *The Review of Higher Education*, 24(1), 87-102.
- Wang, M., Haertel, G., & Walberg, H. (1994). Educational resilience in inner cities. In M. Wang & E. Gordon (Eds.), *Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects* (pp. 45–72). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Warde, B. (2008). Staying the course: Narratives of African American males who have completed a baccalaureate degree. *Journal of African American Studies*, 12(1), 59-72.
- Watkins, D. C., Walker, R. L., & Griffith, D. M. (2009). A meta-study of Black male mental health and well-being. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 36(3), 303-330.
- Watson, L. (2006). The role of spirituality and religion in the experiences of African American male college students. In M.J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college* (pp. 112-127). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Waxman, H. C., Gray, J. P., & Padron, Y. N. (2003). *Review of research on educational resilience*. Berkeley, CA: UC Berkeley Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence..
- Werner, E. E. (1989). High-risk children in young adulthood: A longitudinal study from birth to 32 years. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 59(1), 72-81.
- Werner, E. E. (1993). Risk, resilience, and recovery: Perspectives from the Kauaii longitudinal study. *Development and Psychopathology*, 54, 503-515.
- Werner, E. (2012). Risk, resilience, and recovery. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 21(1), 18-23.
- Whiting, G. W. & Lewis, T. (2008). On manliness: Black masculinity revisited. *AmeriQuests*, 6(1).
- Williams, J. C. (1991). Dissolving the sameness/difference debate: A post-modern path beyond essentialism in feminist and critical race theory. *Duke Law Journal*, 296-323.
- Williams, M. H. (2004). Achievement and retention patterns in a predominantly Hispanic serving institution of higher education. Editor's reflections E. *The SACRAO Journal*, 19(16), 5-13.

- Williams, A. & Justice, M. (2010). Attitudes of African American males regarding counseling in four Texas universities. *Education, 131*(1), 158-168.
- Williamson, S. Y. (2010). Within-group ethnic differences of Black male STEM majors and factors affecting their persistence in college. *Journal of International & Global Studies, 1*(2), 45-73.
- Wilson-Sadberry, K., Winfield, L.F., & Royster, D.A. (1991). Resilience and persistence of African-American males in postsecondary enrollment. *Education and Society, 24*, 87-102.
- Wimer, D. J. & Levant, R. F. (2011). The relation of masculinity and help-seeking style with the academic help-seeking behavior of college men. *The Journal of Men's Studies, 19*(3), 256-274.
- Winkle-Wagner, R. (2010). Choosing college as a life or death decision: First-generation African American women's reflections on college choice. In M. C. Terrell & T. L. Strayhorn, (Eds.), *The evolving challenges of black college students: New insights for policy, practice, and research* (pp. 26 – 48). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Wolf-Wendel, L. E. (2000). Women-friendly campuses: What five institutions are doing right. *Review of Higher Education, 23*(3), 319-345.
- Wood, J. L. & Essien-Wood, I. (2012). Capital identity projection: Understanding the psychosocial effects of capitalism on Black male community college students. *Journal of Economic Psychology, 33*, 984-995.

- Wood, J. L. & Hilton, A. A. (2012a). Community colleges—a metasynthesis of literature on Black males: An overview of 40 years of policy recommendations. In A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood, & C. W. Lewis, (Eds.), *Black males in postsecondary education: Examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts* (5-27). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Wood, J. L. & Hilton, A. A. (2012b). Spirituality and academic success: Perceptions of African American males in the community college. *Religion & Education*, 39(1), 28-47.
- Wood, J.L., Hilton, A.A., & Lewis, C.W. (2012). Black males across institutional types: Recurrent recommendations for research, policy, and practice. In A. A. Hilton, J. L. Wood, & C. W. Lewis, (Eds.), *Black males in postsecondary education: Examining their experiences in diverse institutional contexts* (pp. 209-216). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Wood, J. L. & Palmer, R. T. (2013). Understanding the personal goals of Black male community college students: Facilitating academic and psychosocial development. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17(2), 222-241.
- Yates, L. (2013). *The dissipation of urban high school students' post-secondary educational aspirations and career planning during the college choice process* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from: <http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1927>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.
- Yosso, T. J. & Solórzano, D. G. (2005). Conceptualizing a critical race theory in sociology. *The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*, 117-146.

Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content. In B. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of social science research methods to questions in library and information science*. (pp. 308-319). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Appendix A
Recruitment Flyer

**You are invited to participate in an exciting study on
resilient Black college men!**

**“This is How We Did It:
A Study of Black Male Resilience and Attainment at a Hispanic Serving Institution”**

- **Purpose of Study:** To gain an understanding of the process of academic resilience and the success experiences of Black college men, completing or whom have recently earned an undergraduate degree.
- **Eligibility:** All NJCU Black male Juniors, Seniors or recent graduates (**non-athletes**) in good academic standing, who have earned a minimum 2.0 GPA and 65.5 credits or more.

Participation: Completion of a short demographic questionnaire, and a 90-minute, audio-recorded interview. The interview will be conducted at a place and time that is convenient for you between October 10, 2013 and December 23, 2013.

You will receive \$15 for your participation!

Demond T. Hargrove is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership, Management and Policy program at Seton Hall University conducting research on Black college men.

Participation in this Study is Voluntary. All conversations will remain confidential. Your name and other identifying characteristics will not be used in any reports or presentations.

**If you have any questions or would like to participate,
please contact me as soon as possible at
demond.hargrove@student.shu.edu or 201-892-6670.**

I look forward to learning about how *you did it!*

Seton Hall University
Institutional Review Board

OCT 09 2013

Expiration Date
OCT 09 2014

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Process: Study subjects will be participants in a semi-structured, open-ended, in depth interview that will last approximately 90 minutes. This study utilizes a narrative inquiry as a methodological strategy of investigation, and therefore the interview questions act as a guided to help maintain the focus of the interview, and to assure that the questions are thoroughly addressed. However, the stories each participant chooses to share will be accepted. There are several pre-determined probes built into each section of the interview protocol in order to elicit specific information that address the research questions.

Research Project Overview:

Letter of Consent Process:

Next Steps After the Interview:

Participant Pseudonym:
Date of Interview:
Start Time:
Location:

Interview Question	Research Question Addressed
SECTION I: Background	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about where you come from. 2. What's your family background? How would you describe them? Education, work experiences, religious affiliations, cultural? 3. Tell me about your experiences growing up in... 4. What type of student were you prior to college? 5. What was your mind set about college prior to enrolling? 6. Did you transfer from another college? Why? What were your experiences there? 7. Why did you decide to attend WSU? 8. Are you involved with clubs/student organizations on campus? 9. Do you know WSU is a HSI? Did you know this prior to enrolling? 10. What were your plans for after graduating college? 11. What are the earliest memories you have of hardships (if any) experienced by you and/or family? 12. What were your earliest experiences with race, gender, and or social? 	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #e0e0e0; margin: 0;">Demographic Survey Responses, and Admissions Application Review</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0 0 0;">Establish Background context (Decision to attend HSI, Family, Ethnicity (Caribbean, etc.) Gendered, Racialized, Classed Experiences, Educational, Hardship, Triumph).</p>
SECTION II: RISK RECOGNITION	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What major challenges if any have you faced as a student at WSU from freshman year until now? 2. Upon enrolling in college, what type of immediate challenges did you faced? 3. What issues would you describe as major hurdles that threatened your success? 4. Tell me about an episode in college when you felt like quitting/dropping out of school or were afraid that you could not finish? 5. What would you describe as the most significant threat to completing your? 6. Do you think WSU contributed to the issue? 7. What influence, if any, do you believe race, gender and/or social class had on the situation? 	<p>What are the risk factors that Black male students encounter at a HSI during their college years?</p> <p>Stories of difficulties/threats to success (social, academic, familial, financial) faced while enrolled. And associated feelings (despair, urge to drop out, fear).</p>
SECTION III: RESPONSE	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how you responded to the problem(s) you previously described. 2. Was your first thoughts fight or flight? 3. What was your strategy? 4. Did have and try more than one strategy? 5. Who was the first person you thought could help you? 6. How did you go about reaching out to him/her/them? 7. What type of services did WSU provide you with? 8. Do you believe race, gender and/or social class had an impact on your response to the issue? 	<p>How do Black male students at a HSI understand and explain the process of resilience within the context of protective factors?</p> <p>Story illustrating the process of selecting and deploying the applicable protective factors to counter or recover. When did the student know to deploy protective factors, were there multiple responses?</p>
SECTION IV: INTROSPECTION	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you use the same strategies today? 2. How have you modified those strategies? 3. How do you explain your resilience? 4. How has the experience of facing a risk and overcoming that risk changed you? 5. What do you plan to do with your education? 6. In what ways has WSU helped or hindered you? 7. Do/did you share your experiences with other Black men/students? How so? 8. How did you make it this far in your education, when so many other Black college men have not? 9. Do you have anything else you would like to add? 10. Do you have any questions for me? 	<p>How have the college experiences of these men informed their understanding of and commitment to social justice?</p> <p>Has the student continued to negotiate protective factors? Has he shared <i>his</i> process with others? How did he feel about imparting the knowledge? If student experienced microaggression how do they negotiate racism going forward? How has WSU helped or hindered this student?</p>
Predetermined Probes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sections: Race & Gender – Based on research question, What influence, if any, has race and gender had on the academic resilience of Black male students at a HSI? • All Sections: Institutional Influence: HSI Probe 	

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

This is How We Did It DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I appreciate your willingness to participate in an interview for the project: **This is How We Did It: A Study of Black Male Resilience and Attainment at a Hispanic Serving Institution Through the Lenses of Critical Race Theory.** As I mentioned to you in a previous email, this study focuses on Black male experiences of persistence and attainment in college.

In order to facilitate the interview, please fill out the following demographic questionnaire. Please note: Any identifiable information will be kept *confidential*.

1. Age: _____
2. Marital Status: _____
3. Place of Birth: _____
4. Where did you grow up? _____
5. Please place a check next to the highest level of education completed by your parents.

FATHER

- Less than High School
 High School GED
 Some College
 2-Year College Degree (Associates)
 4-Year College Degree (BA, BS)
 Master's Degree
 Doctoral Degree
 Professional Degree (MD, JD)
 Not Sure

MOTHER

- Less than High School
 High School GED
 Some College
 2-Year College Degree (Associates)
 4-Year College Degree (BA, BS)
 Master's Degree
 Doctoral Degree
 Professional Degree (MD, JD)
 Not Sure

6. How many siblings do you have? _____
7. Do you have any children? If yes, how many and of what gender?
 - a. Yes: _____
 - b. No:
8. What is your cultural background?

a. Caribbean: <input type="checkbox"/>	d. Middle Eastern: <input type="checkbox"/>
b. Latino: <input type="checkbox"/>	e. Other: _____
c. African: <input type="checkbox"/>	
9. What religion are do you affiliate with? _____
10. Are you currently working?

No: <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, off campus: <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, on-campus: <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, both on and off campus: <input type="checkbox"/>
11. If so, approximately how many hours do you work per week? _____
12. Do you live on campus in a residence hall?
 - a. Yes:
 - No:

Thank you for completing this survey.