USING NARRATIVE INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE
PERSISTENCE CHALLENGES FOR
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN EDUCATION

A Dissertation in
Workforce Education & Development Program

by

© Michael C. Wood

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the Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Many of the socioeconomic barriers facing minority students begin with a lack of preparation or under-preparedness at the elementary and secondary levels. Statistically, 80% of White males, 65% of Hispanic males, and 59% of Black males in the 2012–2013 national high school cohort graduated on time (Schott 2012). Minorities lag behind their White counterparts from the time they enter elementary school—falling behind through high school and onto their enrollment in post-secondary institutions. A growing academic literature on education disparities reflects concerns about this trend, including in a recent issue of the *American Behavioral Scientist* (2013) and Littles, Bowers, and Gilmer’s (2007) *Why We Can’t Wait*—both are devoted to the topic of African American males in crisis in education. Existing socioeconomic data offer a bleak economic outlook for African American males. If no action is taken to remedy this disparity, large numbers of males will be left behind both socially and economically. In a commensurate fashion, however, post-secondary institutions may enable and continue to provide opportunities that allow students to ensure their long-term educational success. The involvement in non-academic programming was a key element to each participant’s ability to persist. Each participant within this study were involved in non-academic campus organization i.e. athletics, student government, diversity groups, or college/major related support groups. Participants noted their involvement in these organizations enhanced their abilities to stay continually enrolled. Since post-secondary education is one focus of this study, I have ascertained how African American males matriculate and develop non-cognitive skills as well as deploy an anti-deficit achievement framework for them to succeed academically. Qualitative analyses were conducted on successful African American males attending Mid-Atlantic Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). As such, this study provides additional insight into the lived experiences of African American male collegians at HBCUs and PWI.
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Finally, I would like to thank the young men who participated in this study—thank you for allowing me to tell your story!

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents,

Reverend Calvin S. Wood, Sr. and Reverend Corrine M. Wood—thank you for planting the seed of education in my heart and sprit!

YOUR LOVE HAS BEEN MY ENTERAL GUIDING LIGHT!

“In all the way acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path”

Proverbs 3:6
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Historical Perspective

The life experiences of African American males and their persistence to graduation from post-secondary schools was the focus of this study. Although this area of persistence has been extensively researched, I have identified gaps in the research regarding academic performance, including formal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems, informal extracurricular activities and informal peer-group interactions (Vroom et al. 2013). African American males require support navigating the broad array of social, political, economic, psychological, and educational issues that are deeply rooted in an established United States power structure that, despite efforts to increase minority opportunities, still offers better prospects to the majority (Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson 2009; Cuyjet, 1997; Hucks, 2008; Jenkins, 2006).

Looking at education, and specifically at national levels of education achievement, according to Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson (2009), “[t]he overall level of educational attainment in the United States is both low and stagnate” (p. 223) with regard to African American males; a situation which may mean that employers will have difficulty locating candidates for higher-paying jobs with better long-term prospects (Carnevale & Rose, 2010; Casner-Lotto, Rosenblum, & Wright, 2009).

African American males who seek better opportunities in the labor force must find ways to persist beyond the current education environment to seize opportunities that will improve their post-graduation prospects. In commensurate fashion, post-secondary institutions must continue to provide the types of opportunities that lead students on the
path to long-term educational success (Holzer, 2011; Schwartz & Symonds, 2011).

Educational institutions that do not offer these types of opportunities and resources must be held accountable for the resulting and often continued failures of students. In many cases the group held back due to a lack of resources and prospects are African American males (Benson, 2000; Kunjufu, 1995; Palmer & Young, 2009).

Research has shown that African American males have fallen behind their majority counterparts from the time they enter elementary school to their first year in college (Brown, Bartee, & Hamilton, 2007; Hucks, 2008; Stiff-Williams, 2007; White & Henderson, 2008). Education challenges, combined with socioeconomic (SES) challenges, are often a one-two knock-out punch for African American males, acting to severely curtail if not completely prevent prospects of long-term employment success (Harper, 2010; Jackson, 2010, Jackson & Moore, 2008; Lopez, 2003).

Table 1.1 shows the initial disparity facing African American males with regard to persistence to graduation.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10–13</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14–15</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–17</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–19</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary and post-secondary institutions should view investments in educational resources and opportunities targeting African American males as necessary to both the country’s long-term economic success while providing equal value to all populations in the U.S., thus promoting success in the global economy (Hughes, 2010; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010).

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative research methodologies, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of African American males’ experiences as they persist collegiately. This chapter offers information on the problem, significance of the study, research questions, limitations, definitions of terms, assumptions, and a conceptual framework (Dickens, 2012; Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). Persistence and degree completion rates among African American males were selected for the review of institutional policies and population outcomes. Furthermore, I sought to explore the relationship between non-cognitive skills and an anti-deficit achievement framework via an investigation of the experiences of African American males who matriculated at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Chance University (pseudonym), and Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) York University (pseudonym).

Significance of the Study

The data gathered in this research project were akin to those collected in numerous detailed studies on minority retention rates at Historical Black Colleges Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Bonner, 2001; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper, 2009, 2012; Jackson, 2003; Palmer, Davis, &
Maramba, 2010). The images created of African American males within the U.S. often confine them to environments highlighted by drugs, crime, athletics, and academic failure (Fries-Britt, 1997; Hayes, 2013). Educationally, this negative portrait has been bolstered by the disproportionate amount of research focusing on remediation and disadvantage (Fries-Britt, 1997; Harper & Davis, 2012; Jenkins, 2006). Focusing now on higher education, numerous detailed studies have been conducted on minority retention rates at HBCUs and PWIs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper, 2009; Palmer, Davis & Maramba, 2010; Tinto, 1993).

One of the main reasons for this focus has been the characterization of higher education as one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress in this country, yet for African American males, it has been part of the problem rather than the solution (Boyer, 1997; Brown, Bartee, & Hamilton, 2007). Studies have shown racial and gender disparities in education for African American males (Bowen et al., 2009; Jones & Jackson, 2003; Woodson, 1990). These studies have uncovered “tremendous racial disparities in levels of educational performance, educational attainment, and college graduation rates between Blacks and Whites” (Jones & Jackson, 2003, p. 72). Yet the need for a quality education is widely acknowledged by educators, policy makers, and researchers alike. Malcolm X stated that “education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today” (Malcolm X, as quoted in Myers, 1993, p. 43).

**Impact of Secondary Schools**

Before considering college entrance, let’s take a look at our secondary schools. How are secondary schools preparing African American males for college? In an effort to enhance
their successful entry into higher education, many schools are turning to and have implemented tutorial programs, leadership academies, and mentoring programs (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2007; Fries-Britt, 1997; Public Agenda for College and Career Success, 2008). Each of these programs is essential to the academic and socioeconomic development of African American males (Myers, 2012). Several key questions still revolve around the need to continue to close the achievement gap and improve African American males’ preparation and readiness for college (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, & Uzzell, 2012). Table 1.2 offers additional data relating to African American males’ graduation rates from high school in comparison to White counterparts.

Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>83%</strong></td>
<td><strong>86%</strong></td>
<td><strong>81%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2008.

Scholars have also focused on several key indicators relating to the early literacy achievement gap (Craig, 2003; Harris, 2003). Those indicators include: (a) language use of African American children; (b) literacy experiences of African American families; (c) socioeconomic backgrounds of students; and (d) methods used by classroom teachers (Flowers & Flowers, 2008). What are schools attempting to achieve as they develop pedagogies that offer opportunities for all students and focus on achievement by specific populations, including African American males? In 1949 W.E.B. DuBois offered an
eloquent statement that has been supported by today’s scholars (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Frye, & Vogt, 2010; Hollingsworth, Gallego, Clandinin, Morrell, Portes, Rueda, & Welch, 2007; Lincoln, 1996; Thomas, & Bainbridge, 2002): “We must insist our leaders give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be” (pp. 230–231); just as importantly, comprehensive reading gives those greater minds the opportunity for educational success.

Educationally, reading comprehension is a key component in the lack of development of African American male students. National data show that African American students’ scores for reading achievement are lower than those for other ethnic groups (Hoffman & Llagas, 2003; Jacobson, Olsen, Rice, Sweetland, & Ralph, 2001; Klein & Knitzer, 2007). Rates of secondary school matriculation were higher for White males than for African American males from 1998 through 2008. The data indicate that the achievement gap has widened throughout this time period (see Table 1.3). Furthermore, according to the 2010 Schott State Report on Public Education and Black Males, which offers additional and recent data, African American males are falling behind at the secondary level—the graduation rate for this group is 47% compared to the 78% for their White counterparts. This 31% achievement gap clearly lends urgency to the need for new programs that ensure African American males’ persistence to college enrollment and eventually to graduation.
### Table 1.3

**High School Completion and College Enrollment Rates for Traditional College-Aged Population (Ages 18–24), by Gender and Race/Ethnicity: 1998 to 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>African American Male</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Percent of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Currently Enrolled in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>African American Male</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>9.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>9.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources.* U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 1987–2005; American Community Survey 2006–08. This includes high school equivalency credentials such as the GED® (General Educational Development) credential. Note. <sup>b</sup> Since 2006, data were derived from a different survey and may not be fully compatible with the data for prior years.
Research Questions

Through this study, I have answered three research questions to satisfy the problem statement: Additional research will offer an overview of cognitive and non-cognitive variables in the retention of the African American male. Ultimately, the goal of this research project was to gather the information needed to develop a blueprint for success for African American college-bound male students.

1. How do Historically Black Colleges and University’s and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

2. How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

3. What social challenges have African American males encountered to help them persist at HBCUs or PWIs?

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

The African American males’ overall academic success at the collegiate level is dismal at best in comparison to White counterparts. Table 1.4 offers a clear picture of achievement gaps reflected in graduation rates at each level of African American males’ postsecondary experiences (Carey, 2004; Carter, & Wilson 1993; Harper, 2009).

Table 1.4

<p>| Degree Completion by Race/Ethnicity and Gender (Male): 2004 to 2007 (Selected Years) |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associates</td>
<td>177,467</td>
<td>25,504</td>
<td>179,167</td>
<td>26,344</td>
<td>179,691</td>
<td>27,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>451,554</td>
<td>44,062</td>
<td>473,318</td>
<td>47,477</td>
<td>481,590</td>
<td>49,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>629,021</td>
<td>69,566</td>
<td>652,485</td>
<td>73,821</td>
<td>661,281</td>
<td>73,138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

The approach used in this study was narrative inquiry—this particular method has its limitations. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2004) noted that the researcher must be cautious about the distinction between “the events as lived and the events as told” and to avoid the illusion of “causality”. Additionally, a correlation between two variables does not mean that one variable caused the other (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Furthermore, narrative inquiry is not suitable for all studies. It is incompatible with those studies involving a large number of participants due to the time commitment required to complete a proposed study.

Ethically, narrative inquiry can pose difficult issues for the researcher. Close collaboration between the participant and researcher are an inevitable outcome of the research; however, the disengagement between participants and researcher may prove to be difficult at the end of a research project due to perceived closeness. Similarly, the researcher’s personal biases and subjectivity may influence the results. Peshkin (1988) described subjectivity as a “garment that cannot be removed” (p. 19); thus, researchers must be careful not to impose meaning on participants’ lived experiences.

According to Roller and Lavrakas (2015), sufficient time is needed to assemble data and develop the prerequisite skills needed for qualitative research. They noted the importance of attention to detail, analytical abilities, active listening, the development of a rapport with participants, observation of environment and the understanding of the observers influence/bias to conducting this narrative research. Researchers should consider providing rich yet thick description of studies that allow for replication. Another limitation of using narrative inquiry in studies include a lack of definitive criteria for
assessment of the research (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Riessman, 2008). As a result, narrative inquiry research must be approached with an understanding of its complexities (Carter; 2005; Creswell, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

Finally, this study was limited to seven African American males at an HBCU and PWI. Students identified as straight (heterosexual) males between the ages of 18 and 22. The time spent with each participant focused on their reflections and experiences at their respective institution. This study did not include non-traditional students. The participants were not provided with research questions prior to each interview. Prior to each interview the participants and I reviewed each question to check for understanding. If any or all participants did not understand the data before them, additional time and steps were taken for clarity and understanding.

An additional limitation that could also impact each participant was the population at the institution. York University has a population of roughly 40,000 students, yet Chance University’s student population was roughly 7,500. These numbers could have a direct impact on the resources provided to each student. Additionally, the current budget and endowment for each institution were as follows: York University, $5 billion and $1.80 billion and Chance University, $53 million and $23 million, respectively. These budget allocations could have a direct effect on each participant’s ability to persist.

The researcher’s personal bias could be a limitation due to being a graduate of a Historically Black College and University. I took great steps to ensure not to lead the participants regarding each proposed research question. Each question was carefully co-constructed by myself and my dissertation advisor to ensure bias could be avoided. I
never disclosed my academic background to participants. The only warranted disclosures were connected to my research and dissertation.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms appear in this study.

**Achievement Gap** refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students, such as white students and minorities (Haycock, 2001; The Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013).

**Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework**: The framework inverts questions that are commonly asked about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition (Harper, 2012).

**Critical Race Theory**: is an “academic discipline focused upon the intersection of race, law, and power” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenheimer, Shultz, & Wellman, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2006).

**Deficit Thinking**: examines the ongoing social construction of deficit thinking in three aspects of current discourse – the genetic pathology model, the culture of poverty model, and the "at-risk" model in which poor students, students of color, and their families are pathologized and marginalized (Valencia, 2010).

**Disenfranchisement**: Process by which citizens are deprived of civil rights of citizenship or obstacles that many African American males seek to overcome in order to become academically successful (Howard, 2008).
Diversity: When describing people and population groups, diversity can include such factors as age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, as well as education (American Psychology Association, 2015). Policy founded on the belief that individuals of different races and ethnicities can contribute to the workplace, schools or other settings (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Established by the 1890 Morrill Act. Among the 70 colleges and universities that eventually evolved from the Morrill Acts are several of today’s historically Black colleges and universities. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, defines an HBCU as: …any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans in the United States that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the Black community (Fryer & Greenstone, 2010; White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2016).

Mentee: A person who is guided by a mentor (Bell & Treleaven, 2011).

Mentor: An experienced person who provides instruction, encouragement, guidance, advice, and other support to and helps develop the skills of a less experienced person (American Psychology Association, 2015). A faculty member of some other tenured employed in a secondary or post-secondary institution who engage in the activities of mentoring (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011).

Microaggression: Brief and commonplace verbal, or situational indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights or insults, especially toward members of minority or oppressed groups (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2015). A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional
discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority: Stunning small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of the majority race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Narrative Inquiry:** Narrative inquiry is first and foremost a way of understanding experience. It is also a research methodology. It is, then, both a view of the phenomena of people's experiences and a methodology for narratively inquiring into that experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

**Non-cognitive:** The term “non-cognitive” is used to contrast a variety of behaviors, personality characteristics, and attitudes with academic skills, aptitudes, and attainment (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jacob, 2002; Sedlacek, 2004).

**Open-Ended Interview:** An interview in which the interviewee is asked questions that cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. Open-ended interviews encourage interviewees to talk freely and extensively, providing information that might not be obtained otherwise (Galletta, 2013; Patton, 2002; Wengraf, 2001).

**Persistence:** the quality of state of maintaining a course of action or keeping at a task and finishing it despite the obstacles (such as opposition or discouragement) or effort involved (American Psychology Association, 2015).

**Persistor:** is one who enrolls continuously without interruption and is a full-time degree seeking student (Astin 1975; Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012; Lenning, 1978).

**Predominantly White Institutions:** is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment. However, many of these institutions may also be understood as historically White institutions in
recognition of the binarism and exclusion supported by the United States prior to 1964 (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Retention: persistence of learned behavior or experience during a period when it is not being performed or practiced, as indicated by the ability to recall, recognize, reproduce or relearn it. (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Semi-Structured Interviews: is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or further responses. A semi-structured interviewee does not limit respondents to pre-determined answers (unlike a structured questionnaire (Brinkman, 2014; American Psychological Association, 2015)

Socioeconomic Status (SES): the position of an individual group on a socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and in some societies or parts of society, ethnic origin or religious background (American Psychological Association, 2015). The combined total measure of a person’s work experience and of an individual's or family’s economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation (NCES, 2012). When analyzing a family’s socioeconomic status, the household income, earners’ education, and occupation are examined as well as combined income of each household financial contributor (Currie, 2009; Livingston & Wirt, 2003).

Assumptions

What does it mean to be educated and Black in a White society? Many African American men struggle with their identity, with regard to self-confidence, academic
under-preparedness, peer rejection, racial identity, emotional intelligence and the fear of acting White (Fries-Britt, 2000; Grantham, 2004; Harper, 2006; Harper, 2007; Ogbu, 2004). Black males wonder if educational institutions truly provide an opportunity for economic growth. According to Palmer, Davis, Moore and Hilton (2010), the United States has lost its competitive edge regarding educational attainment among young adults and specifically African American males. While they are confronted with a vast array of risks, obstacles, and social pressures, the majority manages to navigate these with some degree of success (Fries-Britt, 2004; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). Those educators who do not have some understanding of these pressures should be encouraged to seek out additional information.

One source is Harper and Hurtado’s (2011) *Racial and ethnic diversity in higher education*, which addresses many of the reasons for African Americans’ plight. Educators, researchers, policy makers, and other relevant stakeholders also should be asking a very simple yet basic question: “what have educators done to close the achievement gap for African American males?” The lack of progress has fed a long-standing argument between scholars, policy makers, and practitioners on whether schools alone can close the achievement gap, or would the issues children bring to school as a result of being trained in lackluster educational environments are too difficult for the best educators to overcome (Bowen et al., 2009; Dobbie & Fryer, 2009; Gallien, 2007).

Should society embrace projects like the Harlem Children’s Zone and The Eagle Academy in New York, Urban Prep in Chicago, or the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) Meyerhoff Scholars program as models for assisting African American
males through their educational journey? In each of these examples, ambitious models combined community and school investment in a manner that engaged community stakeholders. Much of what the literature upholds is a deficit thinking overview of the educational plight of African American males. This study modeled an anti-deficit achievement framework that gave credence to the successes of African American males and their persistence to graduation. A prevalent one-sided theory emphasizes the failures and of underperforming African American male undergraduate students. This should be counterbalanced with insights collected from students who have managed to navigate their way through higher education. Notwithstanding all that is stacked against them, low teacher expectations, insufficient academic preparation for entry-level college work, racism and culturally unsympathetic campus environments, and the debilitating consequences of severe underrepresentation should not hinder their academic success (Brown, Bartee, & Hamilton, 2007; Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Canada, 2010; Harper, 2012; Noguera, 2003; Valencia, 2010).

**Conceptual Framework**

**Non-Cognitive Factors**

Sociologists Bowles and Gintis (1976) introduced an early non-cognitive theory as an indicator of the overemphasis on cognitive skills regarding the determination of education and economic success. According to Gutman and Schoon (2013), non-cognitive skills could be classified in terms such as character skills, competencies, personality traits, life skills and soft skills, which also include additional characteristics such as motivation, confidence, tenacity, trustworthiness, perseverance, and social and communication skills. Non-cognitive skills are complicated and contested at best.
Increasing academic discussion has focused almost exclusively on cognitive ability and ignored non-cognitive skills (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001). Sedlacek (2004) noted that non-cognitive assessments are used to measure adjustment, motivation and perceptions, rather than the traditional verbal or quantitative measurements by standardized test (Sedlacek, 2004). Garcia (2014) postulated that “non-cognitive skills have been broadly defined as representing the patterns of thought, feelings and behavior” (p. 3).

Additionally, non-cognitive skills support cognitive development, whereas non-cognitive and cognitive skills are reliant upon one another and cannot be isolated from each other (Garcia, 2014; Khine & Areepattamannil, 2016). Sedlacek (2004) further stated that eight non-cognitive variables should be considered when reviewing student admission into collegiate ranks (see figure 1.5).
Table 1.5

*Description of Non-Cognitive Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Number</th>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Positive self-concept</td>
<td>Demonstrates confidence, strength of character, determination and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Realistic self-appraisal</td>
<td>Recognizes and accepts any strengths and deficiencies, especially academic, and works hard at self-development; recognizes need to broaden his or her individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Successfully handling the system (racism)</td>
<td>Exhibits a realistic view of the system on the basis of personal experience of racism; committed to improving the existing system; takes an assertive approach to dealing with existing wrongs, but is not hostile to society and is not a “cop-out”; able to handle racist system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Performance for long-term goals</td>
<td>Able to defer gratification; plans ahead and sets goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Availability of strong support person</td>
<td>Seeks and takes advantage of a strong support network or has someone to turn to in crisis or for encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>Demonstrates strong leadership in any area of his or her background (church), sports, non-educational groups, gang leaders and so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Participates and is involved in his or her community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Knowledge acquired in the field</td>
<td>Acquires knowledge in a sustained or culturally related way in any field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sedlacek (2004), Beyond the Big Test: Non-Cognitive Assessment in Higher Education (p. 37).
An Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

An Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework was employed to guide this inquiry. A considerable literature on African American experiences at HBCUs and PWIs focuses on the challenges and obstructions faced by students, which could be a provocation for the continuance of their disengagement and institutional departure. Harrison (2014) suggested that “Anti-deficit thinking emerged as opposition to deficit thinking that contended ethnic minorities, and the poor, were the cause of their own socio-economic and educational attainment issues” (p. 12). The framework emerged at a time when additional social construction phrases emerged, such as “culturally disadvantaged child” (Black, 1996), cultural deprivation, (Edwards, 1967), “socialization of apathy and underachievement” (Hess, 1970), “cultural deprivation” (Edwards, 1967) and accumulated environmental deficits (Hess & Shipman, 1965) as cited in (Valencia, 2010, p. xiv). In the context of studying African American male achievement, Fries-Britt (1998) noted a disproportionate focus on underachieving African American males. Valencia (2010) believed that the dominance of deficit thinking, “blames the victim way of thinking” whereas failure among students is the result of “alleged internal deficiencies” (p. xi).

Higher education scholars have recently recommended alternative frameworks for the investigation of outcomes among African American male and underrepresented students. Harper (2005) proposed an Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework for Minority Student Achievement (see Figure 1.1) which may be employed to understand how various social agents can act to facilitate the achievement of racial/ethnic minority students. For the purposes of this study, the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework has
been applied at the institutional level to underscore the benefits of focusing on
institutional factors that foster positive outcomes among African American males
(Burton, Burton, McHale, King, & Van Hook, 2016; Museus, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-College Socialization and Readiness</th>
<th>College Achievement</th>
<th>Post-College Persistence in STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILIAL FACTORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did parents help shape one’s college and STEM career aspirations?</td>
<td>How did one negotiate “onlyness” and underrepresentation in math and science courses?</td>
<td>Which pedagogical practices best engaged one in math and science courses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did parents do to nurture and sustain one’s math and science interests?</td>
<td>What compelled one to persist in STEM despite academic challenge and previous educational disadvantage?</td>
<td>How did one craft productive responses to racist stereotypes in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-12 SCHOOL FORCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was it about certain K-12 teachers that inspired math/science achievement?</td>
<td>How did one take advantage of campus resources, clubs, and student organizations?</td>
<td>Which college experiences enabled one to compete successfully for careers in STEM?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did one negotiate STEM achievement alongside popularity in school?</td>
<td>What value did leadership and out-of-class engagement add to one’s preparation for STEM careers?</td>
<td>Which college experiences best prepared one for racial realities in STEM workplace environments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUT-OF-SCHOOL COLLEGE PREP EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which out-of-school activities contributed to the development of one’s science identity?</td>
<td>Which peer relationships and interactions were deemed most valuable to STEM achievement?</td>
<td>What did faculty and institutional agents do to encourage one’s post-undergraduate aspirations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which programs and experiences enhanced one’s college readiness for math and science interests?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who was most helpful in the graduate school search, application, and choice processes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.1.** Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. Adapted from S. R. Harper (2012), Black male student success in higher education: A report from the national Black male college achievement study. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative research methodologies, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of African American males’ experiences as they persist collegiately. This chapter is designed to provide a review of the related literature on the experiences of African American males and their persistence to graduation at post-secondary levels. This chapter also contains an overview of the published literature relevant to the study of African American male persistence. First, I review and provide context to a scholarly understanding of persistence; the impact of the retention theorist is also reviewed. Then, theories and evidence of the impact of the educational achievement gap are presented. This includes evidence of the effects of institutional type, student’s within-college experiences, and specific programmatic practices on persistence. Next, I justify focusing on campus environments with a review of literature regarding financial barriers to persistence. Attention was also paid to the effects of Critical Race Theory and Micro-aggression. In this section I also summarize specific solutions to interventions for persistence. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of solutions and interventions used to guide the current study.

Understanding Persistence

Persistence research has been directed by two principal frameworks. The first is Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1988, 1993) student departure model, in which persistence is a longitudinal process in which students interact with their prospective colleges’ educational and social organizations (Wood, 2011; Wood & Williams, 2013). The second is the model of nontraditional student persistence, which postulates that environmental
factors are variables that take students’ attention and concentration from their collegiate undertakings (Wood & Williams, 2013). Tinto’s (1975, 1987, 1988, 1993) research theorizes that as students become integrated into the academic and social settings of their collegiate experiences, their level of commitment to the institution increases (Swail, 2003). Additionally, Tinto asserted that a student’s increased level of commitment leads to increased levels of persistence. Although Bean and Metzner (1985) suggested that Tinto’s (1975) model does not effectively account for persistence influences upon nontraditional students, they stated that environmental variables have a direct effect on persistence and an indirect effect on persistence through psychological outcomes (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Wood & Williams, 2013). By understanding these differences, the reader could postulate that their model does not specifically focus on the role of social variables in relationship to persistence, but highlights the importance of the students’ environmental and psychological aspects on persistence (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Wood & Williams, 2013).

These perspectives on persistence have been extensively utilized by scholars of the Black male experience (Bonner & Bailey 2006; Dorsey, 1996; Flowers, 2006; Fries-Britt, 2004; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hamilton, 2005; Harper, 2005, 2012; Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Ihekwaba, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Mosby, 2009; Museus, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Robinson, 2014; Schwartz & Washington, 2002; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood & Williams, 2013). The persistence process is fostered through both prescribed and familiar interactions with students, faculty, staff, and organizations (Wood & Williams, 2013). Persistence is often evaluated by each student’s level of engagement in academic pursuits, such as studying, formal meetings
with faculty/staff, informal meetings with faculty/staff, counselors and advisors (Flowers, 2006; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Stiff-Williams, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008; Wood & Williams, 2013), or through the measurement of students’ participation in clubs, student organizations, athletics, collegiate social events, and student government.

**Retention Theorist**

The origin of modern retention begins with Tinto’s student departure theory, which began as a collaboration with Cullen in 1973. Cullen’s earlier research examined and studied longitudinal scholarship on student attrition. The alliance with Tinto (1973) fashioned a theoretical model of attrition and persistence. Tinto’s initial research with Cullen formed the foundation of his 1975 model (Towsend, 2006). In this model, Tinto included concepts from Van Gennep’s (1960) rites of passage theory (Towsend, 2006). The anthropological base of Van Gennep’s theory provided Tinto with a platform through which to apply his theory of student departure to institutions of higher education. An additional inspiration for Tinto’s theoretical development was Spady (1971), who modified the theory of student departure from Durkheim’s suicide theory (1951) (Towsend, 2006). Spady’s theoretical model explored student dropout processes. Spady was one of the initial sociologists to advance the theory of student persistence based on Durkheim’s work. Tinto used the egotistical departure methodology proposed by Durkheim, as the means to clarifying a student departure from college.

The problem of student retention initially surfaced with higher education 50 years ago, (Habley. Bloom & Robbins, 2012; Valencia, 2010; Tinto 1973. Student attrition was observed through the lens of psychology. Student retention was viewed as a reflection of singular characteristics, skills, and motivations. Students who did not persist were viewed
as less capable, less motivated, and less enthusiastic and were indifferent to the benefits of a college matriculation. In many educational circles the student was viewed as the failure; institutions were not. We now refer to this as blaming the victim (Tinto, 1975; Valencia, 2010). This narrowing viewpoint has swirled around the African American male’s quest to matriculate.

Tinto (1993) identified three main causes of student departure: academic complications; the inability of students to resolve individual, educational and occupational goals; and their inability to remain engaged in the educational and social life of their perspective institutions. Tinto’s “Model of Institutional Departure” indicated that to persist, students ought to assimilate into formal (academic performance), informal (faculty/staff interactions), academic systems, formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems (Tinto, 1993). This study also reviewed the stages of persistence as these related to the African American male, beginning with recruitment to college, orientation, pre-entry assessments and placement and first-year experiences.

Tinto’s (1975) student departure theory focused on four-year college students, and combined six mechanisms resulting from his collaboration with Cullen, regarding influences on student persistence. Tinto’s theory suggested that students come to college with certain expectations and ambitions. Tinto’s model of student persistence is comparable to Astin’s (1984) involvement theory—but the theory suggested by Tinto affords researchers an opportunity to study student change and develop future models for examining influences on student persistence (Karp, 2011). This model established a theoretical foundation for empirical research. Tinto endeavored to comprehend the
longitudinal process of student persistence. His research included behavioral investigation and the effects of behaviors on student persistence. Finally, Tinto’s 1975 model focused on student academic and social integration. Tinto aspired to better understand how each student was immersed in the dynamics of college life. Tinto’s Model of Student Departure examines a variety of academic, psychological, and social factors potentially leading to a student’s ultimate departure from the university in which s/he is enrolled. Tinto (1993) contended that student departure is a consequence of the collaboration between the individual student and the college or university as an organization. Furthermore, the meaning placed by individual students on these interactions is critical (Tinto, 1993).

For African American males to persist to graduation they must learn to steer through racial and educational injustices (Hale, 2001; Kluger, 2011; Robinson, 2014). One of the cognitive inequities is lack of preparation for the “Big Test”. Numerous studies have been conducted on cultural and racial biases instruments utilized to measure important academic aptitude. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Test (ACT) and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are taken by incoming undergraduate and graduate students for anticipated academic placement (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Bowen, Chingos & McPherson, 2009). These types of standardized instruments have been criticized as barriers to the enrollment of nontraditional and minority students. The results have been cited as insufficient to address issues of persistence and predictors of success for all students (Jaeger & Eagan, 2007). Sedlacek, in Beyond the Big Test: Non-cognitive Assessment in Higher Education (2004), stated that educators should also consider non-cognitive
variables relating to adjustment, motivation, and student perception rather than solely relying on traditional verbal and quantitative (cognitive) areas typically measured through standardized tests.

Sedlacek (2004) developed several non-cognitive questionnaires to assist educational institutions with the assessment of students. One assessment is the Alternate Form B: Non-cognitive Questionnaire, which is used not only to collect personal data on students but also explore student interests, goal-setting capabilities, community service activities and external groups’ influences on a student’s behaviors. This instrument can be used as a beginning assessment tool to validate a student’s entrance into a postsecondary setting while assessing his or her ability to persist to graduation.

Additional recent research by Harper (2012) addressed an anti-deficit reframing model for persistence. Rather than adding to the now exhaustive body of literature and conversations on why African American male enrollments and degree attainment rates are so low, Harper’s study sought informative insights from engaged student leaders who did well and maximized their collegiate experiences (Harper, 2012). In Harper’s (2012) *Black Male Student Success in Higher Education*, the researcher used an anti-deficit reframing model to explain how African American males use their attitudes and perceptions to navigate their undergraduate and graduate process. Harper noted and postulated the following questions:

- How were aspirations for postsecondary education cultivated among African American male students who are currently enrolled in college?
- What compels Black undergraduate men to pursue leadership and engagement opportunities on their campuses?
• How can Black male collegians manage to persist and earn their degrees, despite transition issues, racist stereotypes, academic under-preparedness, and other negative forces?

• What resources are most effective in helping Black male achievers earn GPAs above 3.0 in a variety of majors, including STEM fields?

• How can Black men go about cultivating meaningful, value-added relationships with key institutional agents (Harper, 2012, p. 5)?

Harper’s conceptual framework examines the success of Black male retention but also the overall engagement and success experienced by African American males as they persist. For many African American males an educational institution must promote student engagement through the negotiation of peer support for achievement, develop political acumen for success in professional settings in which they are racially underrepresented, develop strong Black identities that incite productive activism, acquire social capital and access to resources, and overcome previous educational and socioeconomic disadvantage (Fisher, 2015; Harper, 2006, 2007; Harper & Griffin, 2011; Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Closing the Achievement Gap

Achievement refers to the extent to which learners acquire the knowledge and skills sought by instructors during the education process (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). The African American male achievement gap begins at the secondary level and continues in institutions of higher learning according to Stiff-Williams (2007). Over the last two decades, in comparison to their male counterparts,
six-year graduation rates for African American males aged 18–24 with high school credentials remained relatively flat (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

_Six-Year Graduation Rates for Full Time Certificate/Degree Seeking Men by Cohort_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


To counteract this situation, among other courses of action, African American males must change their academic outcomes and counter any risks they experience. Further, they should adopt behaviors that do not make them complicit in their own failures (Noguera, 2003). Historically Black Universities and Predominately White Institutions could develop programs to provide support and bring an end to educational policies and practices that do not support African American males. These percentages indicate the need for a paradigm shift in the educational landscape for African American male secondary students. Educators, parents and instructional institutions should work collectively to ensure rigor and relevance are key ingredients in practices undertaken to
ensure the educational advancement of African American males (Brown, Bartee, & Hamilton, 2007).

African American males face obstacles in gaining entrance and acceptance into higher education institutions throughout the United States. Further, the disparities in high school graduation rates continue into college, according to research. In 2007, 15% of African American males had attained a college degree, compared to 31% of White males (Shin & Kominski, 2010). The graduation rate issue raises several questions. For example, how can these trends be reversed for African American males? How can educational institutions improve their efforts to retain and graduate African American males? What tools and resources are currently, or could be, made available to this population to better prepare them for eventual graduation and commensurate leadership roles and success? Both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are experiencing low academic persistence rates regarding African American males (Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010). This information and other related findings and data offered here point to the need for U.S. education-focused infrastructure to begin to view educational efforts on behalf of minority populations, and specifically African American males, as investments in increasing and enhancing human capital in the U.S. workforce (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2010).

The Economics of Education

Financial Persistence

For the African American male, enrolling in college requires the completion of at least four critical tasks: graduating from high school, meeting minimal collegiate qualifications, applying to the university or college of choice and in many cases finding
the financial assistance needed to pay for this education (Bowen et al., 2009; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Flint, 1993; Perna, 2006). The process of determining the cost of increasing African American males’ ability to matriculate through college or university can be complicated and has many factors, including socioeconomic status (SES), university pricing, and parental assistance (Bowen et al., 2009; Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005; Harper, 2009; Singell, 2004). Escalating tuition costs and fees are increasing the number of students who depend on financial aid to gain access to higher education (College Board, 2011; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). For many African American males, the federal government’s Pell Grant program, state grant programs, subsidized and unsubsidized loans, private loans and institutional grants provide the financial assistance needed to attend and afford entry and admission to college (Bettinger, 2004; Dynarski & Scott-Clayton, 2007).

The African American male college-bound student has many aspirations, plans, and choices (Brown, 2011; Harper, 2010; Tinto, 1993). Their persistence and ultimate success in college stem from a multifaceted set of processes that start prior to their junior and senior years in high school. According to Mundel (2001), the African American male should research several questions prior to his entry into the collegiate ranks:

1. How do grant/loan programs affect student and parental decisions and behaviors during middle school and early high school years that may influence college participation?

2. How do grant/loan programs affect student and parental decisions and behaviors during later high school years that may influence college participation?
3. How do student grant/loan programs affect enrollment rates and decisions about where and how to attend?

4. How do grant/loan programs affect college persistence, performance, success, and completion?

The educational matriculation of the African American male and his ability to persist to graduation will be guided in large part by his ability to sustain himself financially. Within the United States, the cost of a college education has climbed nearly 30% in the past 10 years and shows no sign of stabilizing in the near future (Department of Education, 2006; Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2014; Riegg, 2008). Over the last decade, the African American male has witnessed an increase in the number and amount of loans provided, in comparison to grants—this paradigm shift has decreased the purchasing power of the maximum Pell award and thereby lessened African American males’ ability to matriculate (College Board, 2002, 2006, 2011). This additional financial stress could impede his ability to persist. Chen and DesJardins (2010) postulated that despite the increase in the absolute number of degree recipients among minority students, they continue to lag behind their White peers in completing a bachelor’s degree (Davis, 2009). Time-to-degree directly affects the African American male’s education-related finances. According to Bowen et al. (2009), time-to-degree varies by socioeconomic status. Statistically, the African American male spends an additional 2.4 semesters beyond his fourth year; this extended time-to-degree ultimately increases his cost to persistence (Bowen et al., 2009; Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Dowd, 2004).
Racial Inequities

Discussions of educational equity focusing on minority access and success often include a review of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical Race Theory is an academic discipline focused upon the intersection of race, law, and power (Bergerson, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Brown, Carnoy et al., 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2006). Critical Race Theory has played a major role in efforts to uncover inequity and social injustices in U.S. schools (Bell, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Harper, 2009; Taylor, 2006). The reason for its use in such efforts is simple: “Race is a normal part of American life, often lacking the ability to be distinctively recognized, and thus is difficult to eliminate or address” (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009, p. 390). Racism is a prevalent condition in the United States that has been interwoven into its culture (Brown, 2011, 2012; Crenshaw, 1997; Gillborn, 2006). As a result, at times African American males face racial micro-aggressions: “subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000, p. 60). Since post-secondary education is one focus of this study, it would be interesting to ascertain how African American collegiate males interpret these micro-aggressions and whether they in fact ultimately affect their ability to persist to graduation. As Harper (2009) stated, “The manufacturing of social, educational, economic, and political inferiority has managed to persist since the publication of Carter G. Woodson’s epic book, The mis–education of the negro” (p. 697). In Woodson’s words: “The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies…if you teach the Negro that he has accomplished as much
as any other race, he will achieve and aspire to equality and justice without regard to race” (Woodson, 1933, p. 192).

**Solutions and Interventions**

Changing the current status of African American males in U.S. education institutions will take more than intervention programs, special education courses and targeted and/or focused teacher training programs (Jenkins, 2006). Society must take extreme measures to change the educational power structure. According to Roach (2001), for real investments to occur that will truly benefit minority populations, and in this case specifically African American males, society must perceive these populations as vital assets tied to, among other things, the growth of local economics and the social order. Secondary and post-secondary institutions must develop both education and community-focused initiatives that assist African American males in their persistence to graduation.

Garibaldi (1992), Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009), and Noguera (2003) offered several suggestions to educational institutions seeking ways to employ community-based best practices that enhance African American males’ educational success:

1. African American males should be taught business/professional etiquette, and workplace values in school. They should also be taught the overall importance of educational success.

2. African American males should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activates that relate to academics and leadership.

3. African American male college students should have a stronger and more active presence in their local schools as teacher aids, speakers, tutors, mentors, and workshop facilitators.
4. Educators should encourage African American males at an early age to pursue college or postsecondary education.

5. School districts should hire African American males.

6. Businesses should provide rewards and incentives such as summer apprenticeships.

7. Educators should incorporate relevant coursework such as family living skills, budgeting, finance and business and job related communication and writing skills into their curriculum within relevant courses (Hemphill, 2008).

In addition to this list, mentorship is also a key component of African American males’ success, especially for those at the collegiate level. In fact, making connections with faculty/staff members is a critical component of their overall success (Hughes, 2010) since the development of these relationships encourages academic success. It has been shown that students, faculty, and staff benefit from engaging with others from diverse backgrounds (Hughes, 2010; Hurtado, 1996; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999). African American males must engage in all aspects of their educational institutions. Most importantly, they must actively seek ways to elevate themselves above and beyond any limited expectations of them socially, economically, culturally, and educationally, and work intensively to be greater than perceived norms for specific populations.

While most acknowledge a widespread need for better schools, problems outside the classroom that derail the educational accomplishments of African American males also ought to be addressed. The achievement gaps begin at home—thus, parents require education on the simple steps they can take to engage and develop their children’s
cognitive and non-cognitive attributes in the early stages of their lives (Jacob, 2002). Further, communities need to be strengthened so African American males have safe, enriching environments in which they can learn and develop, where leadership, college, and educational successes are as possible as they are in middle-class communities (Canada, 2010). Minority populations, and specifically in this case African American males, must strive to overcome these and related challenges. Additionally, Bowen et al. (2009) identified additional societal and institutional challenges that should be overcome.

• Overall levels of educational attainment in the U.S. are low and stagnant—program completion should be emphasized.
• The U.S. educational system harbors huge disparities in regard to graduation rates related to race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.
• Graduation rates must be improved for the underrepresented minority students with special attention paid to African American males and students from low-SES backgrounds.
• Efforts should be made to reduce time to degree completion for underrepresented minorities.
• Higher education institutions must become the principal engines addressing these challenges.

For some time, African American males have been an overlooked population within secondary schools and college campuses. Their educational achievements in the wake of socioeconomic and educational inequities clearly demonstrate strong desires and indomitable spirit with regard to persistence to graduation. In order for African American males to achieve educational equity, they must continue to challenge themselves and
become leaders—first, within their communities by becoming active members of
volunteer organizations. They must engage with others through mentoring and
mentorship programs.

Finally, education should be front and center among African American males’
career expectations. Persistence to graduation must continue to be the guiding light for
personal and professional endeavors. While it is important to acknowledge and honor
educational and historical advances, African American males must also press for
governmental and educational policy efforts that will increase their opportunities to
persist to graduation (Harper, Patton & Wotten, 2009).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research techniques, more specifically, narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of how African American males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) persist. This chapter provides a discussion of the methodology used for this study. Additionally, this chapter also includes discussion of my plan for participant selection, techniques for data collection and analysis, a description of the processes used to ensure trustworthiness regarding inquiry, and the researcher’s background.

Summary of Research Kind and Type

This section provides the specific details of the research methodologies used in this study. Further, it offers a foundation for the use of a narrative inquiry within the paradigm of qualitative research for the purposes of analyzing participants’ stories, as well as assisting and encouraging them to identify non-cognitive and social parameters that could affect persistence. I sought to understand why African American males persist in spite of the inequitable treatment many face in our public universities. This chapter offers information on the methodology, problem, research characteristics, participant’s selection data collection, design analysis and design summary Persistence and degree completion rates among African American males were selected for the review of institutional policies and population outcomes (Dickens, 2012). Furthermore, I sought to explore the relationship between non-cognitive skills and an anti-deficit achievement framework via an examination of the experiences of African American males who
matriculate at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

A Narrative Inquiry Design

Narrative inquiry was selected as the desirable methodological approach for the execution of the current investigation. Narrative Inquiry allows for a detailed examination of all participants included in the study. The term ‘narrative’ comes from the Greek word “narro” which means to know (Emihovich, 1995). This approach guides the investigation by enabling a better understanding of each institutional setting and condition that could shape African American males’ experience within the institution. Although various definitions exist, Riessman (2008) stated that narratives are event-centered and depict human action and are experience-centered. Additionally, Meier and Stremmel (2010) proposed that “narrative inquiry in qualitative research is a process of studying and understanding experience through storytelling or narrative writing” (p. 1). Riessman (2008) indicated that “the researcher does not find narratives but participates in their creation” (p. 21). Narratives are explorations of occurrences within real-life contexts and are especially useful when boundaries between occurrences and contexts are not clear (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013; Riessman, 2008; Yin, 2003). In this study, the principal investigative participants were African American males, and information was sought on their persistence as it relates to a non-cognitive development model and an anti-deficit achievement framework approach.
The Problem

Although this area of African American male persistence has been extensively researched, I identified gaps in the research regarding academic performance, formal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and informal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems (Bank, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990; Harper, 2012). African American males require support in navigating the broad array of social, political, economic, psychological, and educational issues that are deeply rooted in an established U.S. power structure that, despite efforts to increase minority opportunities, still offers better prospects to the majority (Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Cuyjet, 1997; Jenkins, 2006).

I attempted to understand why African American males persist despite the inequitable treatment many face in our public universities. This chapter offers information on the problem, research questions, measurement, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis for this study. Persistence and degree completion rates among African American males were selected for the review of institutional policies and population outcomes (Vroom et al., 2013). Furthermore, I sought to explore the relationship between non-cognitive skills and an anti-deficit achievement framework via an investigation of the experiences of African American males who matriculate at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

Research Questions

Through this study, I sought to answer three research questions to satisfy the problem statement: Additional research offers an overview of non-cognitive variables in
the retention of the African American male. Ultimately, the goal of this research was to gather the information needed to develop a blueprint for success for African American college-bound male students. The research questions guiding the design of this study were best answered using Narrative Inquiry. Creswell (1998), Harper (2012), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Sedlacek (2004) noted that the how and why questions are better pursued through qualitative inquiry. The research questions that directed this study were focused on the social characteristics and institutional practices of selected HBCUs and PWIs and their influence on African American males’ experience, persistence, and accomplishment, as well as how each factor affects each experience of persistence.

1. How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?
2. How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?
3. What social challenges have African American males encountered to help them persist at HBCUs or PWIs?

**Understanding Life’s Stories**

Stories about an African American male’s culture, class, occupation, etc., can affect his self-confidence, his goals, and the choices he makes. These stories aren’t only accounts, but narratives that are realities for these young men within their communities, and their organizations (Richardson, 1990). By carefully analyzing each narrative, the researcher can show how different ideologies and relationships of each participant has been directed by their personal backgrounds (Dielmann 2009).
Richardson (1990) stated that, “Social and generational cohesion, as well as social change, depend upon this ability to empathize with the life stories of others” (p. 127).

**Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative research methodologies, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of African American males’ experiences as they persist collegiately. I sought a deeper understanding of African American males’ experiences in relation to and in the framework of institutional conditions that could contribute to their persistence during their matriculation at selected institutions of higher learning. Personal engagement of researchers in conducting qualitative research is common and the researchers’ personal experiences and insights can be a critical factor in the interpretation of data (House, 2005; Maxwell, 2012; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is “intrigued with the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions...qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). Additionally, perspective and reflexivity are important considerations, as qualitative researchers have an obligation to be mindful of and reflexive about the biases they may possess (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 2012; Smith, 2008).

Several characteristics differentiate qualitative research from quantitative approaches to scientific inquiry (Patton, 2002; Smith, 2008). Initially, participants are selected for their rich insights into the phenomena under investigation, rather than for the purposes of making a sweeping statement or conclusions regarding the larger population. Participants were also selected for their insights into how those factors shape the success
of African American males on campus. Second, qualitative research concentrates on the substance of the experience, as opposed to quantity. Consequently, qualitative inquiry can be used to understand the richness of the experiences rather than a particular object of that experience (Harper, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Finally, in contrast to numerical reports of statistical significance produced in quantitative research, the findings from narrative research are reported, including syntheses, storytelling, narration, and participants’ actual quotations (Riessman, 2008).

Site Selection

The institutions included in this study were chosen for their effectiveness in the area of African American male persistence and degree completion. I do not postulate that these institutions can become more productive regarding the persistence of African American males, nor did I intend to ascertain whether institutional conditions within each school will necessarily be effective at other four-year colleges or universities. Each college or university was selected based upon the supposition that each foster conditions advantageous to the success of African American males who matriculate at their respective campuses. Additionally, this study was based on the premise that higher education policymakers, administrators, and faculty members can find value in understanding how HBCUs and PWIs have managed to achieve effectiveness and equity to the extent they foster success among minority student populations. In the next section, I explain the processes by which participants were selected for inclusion in the study.

Participant Selection

Patton (2002) noted that there is no rule for sample size in qualitative research: “the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more
to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p. 245). The population for a study is an individual or group of participants from a particular group or class (Lutz & Samir, 2011). The target population for this study were African American male postsecondary students from Historical Black Colleges Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) seeking baccalaureate degrees. A purposeful sample was drawn to obtain the essence of the research questions being investigated. For the purposes of this study, I identified three African American males who matriculated at a selected HBCU and four African American males at a selected PWI who were between the ages of 18 and 22 years and had a working understanding of the campus environment, instructional and institutional policies, programs, and practices. This study measured the influences of time-to-degree, financial influence, and social/racial barriers to persistence. The population was composed of full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who were African-American males (and excluded non-degree-seeking and provisional African American male undergraduate students). The criteria for subject selection also included the following: African American males at Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) who attended K–12 school systems where they were in the minority.

**Data Collection Methods**

According to Clandinin (2007), Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000) and Creswell (2003, 2007), qualitative research is dissimilar to quantitative research because the researcher is a major part of the process and can be considered one of the qualitative instruments. When the researcher conducts an in-depth interview, or observes a party, he
or she is affecting and becomes involved in the research (Baptiste, personal communication, June 2, 2015). Creswell (2003) identified data collection as fitting into four categories: observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. Data collection for this study began with one-on-one semi-structured open-ended interviews with African American males from each selected institution. Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of the unstructured, follow-up interviews (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2004; Neighbors, Trierweiler, Munday, Thompson, Jackson, Binion, & Gomez, 1999; Singer, 2005). The topics in a semi-structured interview were pre-determined during the in-depth interview process. This researcher was attentive to what the interviewee said, and responded with follow-up questions and probes. The in-depth interviews began with a discussion of each participant’s individual knowledge of their collective campus environments, school policies, procedures, and practices perceived to contribute to student success. Follow-up individual interviews were completed that deepened my understanding of the cultural and educational environments. Students were asked to identify non-cognitive programs as they related to their understanding of persistence. As a subset of the semi-structured interview and observation process, Sedlacek’s noncognitive questionnaire and recent book, *Beyond the Big Test* (2004) and Harper’s *Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework* (2012) were utilized to inform and further answer my non-cognitive interview questions. Although these questions are not exhaustive of each framework, each was used to inform and provide insight into African American males’ needs on each prospective campus.

Additionally, students were asked interrelated questions that may directly influence their entrenched personal values, core beliefs, campus initiatives, and
behaviors, and therefore could affect individual and collective assumptions and possibly contribute to their individual and collective success at their respective universities. A triangulation of methods was used in which three or more methodologies were utilized and the results compared against one another, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the behaviors of each participants lived experience as shared in this study (Dielmann, 2009; Drayton, 2012). Finally, and to assist with triangulation of the data collection. I included observations, videotaped interviews, and one-on-one interview methodologies.

**Data Analysis**

The primary data analysis method used in the current study was the explanation-building method described by Yin (2003). Explanation-building consists of analyzing each individual case successively toward building a cross-case description. The first phase of data analysis consisted of interpreting the characteristics and institutional programs and practices perceived to influence the persistence and graduation of African American males from their respective institution. I collected, recorded and transcribed the data, gleaning insights during all aspects of the data collection and analysis process.

Analyzing narratives should take into account the “signs, symbols, and expression of feelings in language” with the understanding the “researcher is collaboratively constructing the narrator’s reality, not just passively recording and reporting” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.123). The participants did not tell their stories chronologically during each interview. I harvested pieces of the transcripts of each interview to create the story in a logical, yet simplified format to follow. The importance of this procedure was to stay true to the original quotes of the participants while editing to make the story coherent and logical to follow. As I reviewed each
transcript over and over, the pieces of their stories began to take shape. I gathered like themes within each transcript, using the coding described and then drafted the stories and descriptions into what seemed to be an easy to read and easy to follow format.

Saldana’s (2015) Streamline Code to Theory Model of Qualitative Inquiry, and open coding were the basis for my coding methodology (Figure 3.1). Saldana (2015) suggested that by coding manually “there is something about manipulating qualitative data on paper and writing codes in pencil that give you more control over ownership of the work” (p. 21). During the coding process, each participant’s narratives were co-constructed by myself and the participants.

I use the term co-constructed to refer to the following process. I transcribed each interview verbatim and the transcript was reviewed by the participant for accuracy. Following each review, I had direct conversations with each participant via email, phone and/or in person to review and better understand their responses. After each transcript was drafted each participant re-read his narrative and recommended revisions, additions and deletions as needed. Revisions were made (if any) at the direction of each participant. Each participant approved the final version of his narrative before it became part of this study. The participant’s narratives are presented in their entirety in chapter four of this study.
Figure 3.1. Streamline Code to Theory Model Qualitative Inquiry (Saldana, 2015).

Patton (2002) indicated that the beginning of qualitative analysis occurs with the capturing and tracking of analytical insights during the collection of the data. By tracking my insights using a field pad following the conversational interviews I was able to refer to the journal/field pad as I created narratives from recordings of their conversations and transcripts. Through my immersion in the data, I was compelled to become intimately familiar with the discourse and understanding of their “core meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453) through reflection on various stories, which allowed me to recognize themes, events, patterns, categories, quotations and people from the stories, looking for similarities and uniqueness (Dielmann, 2009; Drayton, 2012).
Each category, theme and perspective materialized from my reading and re-reading the stories (Dielmann, 2009; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). It was important that the categories, themes and patterns be consistent within the participant’s stories (Dielmann, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Patton, 2002). Through the development of these themes, a coding system was designed to find the essential information within each transcript and to indicate relevance. I used colored markers and my own abbreviations/codes. Additionally, I coded each transcript and narrative with a pattern to identify the various categories as outlined above.

Analyzing narratives encompasses the telling of the experience. According to Riessman (2002), it is important to examine why the story was told in the manner in which it was told. Furthermore, a story should be reviewed within its entire context, by taking into account such things as emotions, length and details of a described event and environment (Dielmann, 2009). Riessman (2002) suggested that people use stories to interpret the past, “the meanings of life events are not fixed or constant; rather they evolve, influenced by subsequent life events” (p. 705).

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of this study was designed to provide an accurate voice to the young men who shared their stories. The value of any qualitative study is steadfastly linked to its credibility; its conceptual framework; and the fundamental philosophical propensities of the researcher who creates the criteria for adjudicating its quality and credibility (Dielmann, 2009; Patton, 2002). The criteria utilized to adjudicate the quality and trustworthiness of this study were credibility, dependability and conformability. I will discuss each of these in more detail.
The credibility of a qualitative study is associated with the rigor of the methodology selected, the credibility of the researcher, and the credence and value of the qualitative research (Dielmann, 2009; Patton, 2002). I used triangulation (one-on-one in-depth interviews, observations and videotape). Each participant checked and reviewed the transcripts and interviews for clarity and correctness. I also discussed my findings generally with each young man. The use of triangulation in this manner increases the dependability and quality of the study, thereby “countering the concern that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (Patton, 2002, p. 563).

Finally, confirmability involves examining study results or findings so that they may be confirmed or validated by additional researchers. The use of an audit to review the data from research findings by outside reviewers was employed to certify the confirmability of the study. This will allow additional researchers an opportunity to confirm the findings by following the “trail” of the researcher (Dielmann, 2009; Merriam, 2002). Additionally, I used a research field pad that detailed my personal and participant’s reflections, complications with the study and my overview of the data collection process and my comprehension of the data analyzed. A detailed explanation of how data were collected and analyzed is offered in the Qualitative Research Design Summary. Through an examination of the data and findings, each outside expert could review the research critically, allowing for summary judgment to ensure confirmability. Further, recognized investigation standards have been followed (Dielmann, 2009; Patton, 2002).
I kept all records and documentation from the initial proposal stage up through final completion of my study, to include the length of time required as a condition for the study by each university’s Institutional Review Board within a secured, enclosed environment. In this way, an accurate audit trail was maintained. Should any other researcher wish to review my research process, the results can be determined by following the research design methodology and carefully observing to the subsequent data.

**Background of Researcher**

In addition to the credence of the methods chosen, it is important that the researcher be credible as well. My background includes over 20 years of experience as an educator, administrator, athletic director, coach and counselor, which motivates me to tell the stories of the African American males who participated in my study. I am an African American male from a working-class family, with strong working class roots, based upon God, love, family and a commitment of selfless service to mankind. However, through hard work and ingenuity my desire was to provide a voice to a group of young men who have been marginalized, spat upon, held back, socially deconstructed, and physically and emotional lynched, by those in the majority. I presented their stories in an intentional effort to raise awareness, by encouraging African American men to address issues of deficit thinking and marginalization. However, academic and personal achievements have arisen because of their stories (Harper, 2014; Richardson, 1990).

**Consent**

Prior to collection of data, I obtained consent from both the institutions and the participants. Before beginning the study, consent was applied for and received from the
Institutional Review Boards of York University and Chance University (pseudonyms). Once permission was received, I sought out my participants as outlined. Once I received volunteers, I obtained informed consent from each participant prior to his inclusion in this study. I verbally explained the purpose of my study to each participant. We reviewed the research time line requirements and the data collection procedures I intended to use. After each verbal explanation, I acquired written consent from each participant; a copy of the consent form is included in the appendices of this dissertation (see Appendix B). During the verbal and written consent phases of my research, participants were provided and encouraged to ask questions. I provided continued feedback as needed to ensure each participant understood the informed consent process. Copies of each informed consent document were given to each participant for review and signature, and a copy retained by the researcher. At the completion of individual interviews, narratives were analyzed and shared with participants for review and feedback.

**Qualitative Research Design Summary**

According to Maxwell (2012), a good design is one in which the components work harmoniously together; the design should be efficient and function successfully. The following offers an overview of my research design process and its functionality. The evidence of the research design summary can be found in Appendices A through I.

1. **Completion of IRB:** As part of each university’s policy an (IRB) was completed and approved by each institution. I spoke generally with each university representative to ensure direction and compliance.
2. **Development of Preliminary Research Questions:** My pilot study research questions were developed by myself and my advisor. We met over a period of several weeks to formalize and develop questions.

3. **Development of In-depth Demographic Questionnaire:** Each demographic question was designed using Sedlacek’s 2004 Non-Cognitive Questionnaire as the basis. I along with my advisor reviewed and agreed on each question to be asked.

4. **Development of Pilot Study:** The pilot study was based upon and agreed to by each advisor at the respective institution. I used a non-cognitive anti-deficit achievement framework to guide my initial study.

5. **Selection of Institutions:** I identified each institution as a result of my previous matriculation. I completed my undergraduate education at a HBCU and wanted to ensure this type of institution was represented within my research. Additionally, I currently matriculate at a PWI and wanted to incorporate this experience utilizing participants from this type of school as well.

6. **Traveled to HBCU Institution:** Throughout the early spring, summer and fall of 2016. I traveled to my participant’s institution, which was an HBCU.

7. **Consult with HBCU Professor on Selection of Participants:** I met with my local advisor at my HBCU to discuss my ongoing research and to begin interviewing potential participants for my research. His advice influenced the development of future research questions and led to access to the university’s lead financial officer and eventually access to the university president.
8. **Developed Email to Send to Participants:** An email was developed and sent to participants on the study and possible participation. Replies were reviewed for adherence to stated criteria.

9. **Selection of Participants for Pilot Study:** Selection of participants took place with the assistance of my advisor and in-person discussions with participants prior to the interview process.

10. **Development of Journal/Field Pad:** A field pad was utilized throughout the interview process for review and reminders of salient discussions from interviews.

11. **Conduct of Interviews with Participants in Pilot Study at HBCU & PWI:**

    Interviews were completed at each selected campus over several weeks.

    Preliminary research questions were utilized for understanding and review.

12. **Member Check (email, telephone calls):** Upon completion of interviews, the raw transcriptions were sent to each participant for review. I utilized emails and checked with participants via phone for understanding and corrections. Raw transcriptions were then edited and updated and resent via email back to participants for approval or rewriting per their specifications.

13. **Development of Preliminary Codes/Themes from Pilot Study:** Hand-coding was developed utilizing Saldana’s Streamline Code to Theory Model of Qualitative Inquiry.

14. **Review and Revision of Research and Interview Questions:** After the completion of the above pilot study, my research questions were updated and rewritten to better reflect the proposed research study. My research advisor and I
met to discuss, review, and make changes to ensure trustworthiness, conformability and validity were met.

15. **Completion of Pilot Study**: My pilot study was completed during the summer of the current academic year.

16. **Presentation of Preliminary Findings to HBCU President**: My preliminary findings were presented to the current HBCU president. Our meeting took place within the president’s office; he allowed one hour for discussion and review and asked to review my final research study upon completion.

17. **Selection of Participants for Study (not those included in the Pilot Study)**: I completed the same process earlier with the pilot study, but identified a new group of participants for my research study.

18. **Conduct of In-depth Interviews at HBCU & PWI**: New interviews were completed at each institution. After identifying each participant using the same format as stated above, I reviewed each question prior to the beginning of our interview. I with the participants checked for understanding and clarity of each question. I carefully explained the meaning of words, questions and phrases as needed. This review and checks added for a smooth transition from one question to the next.

19. **Videotaped Interviews**: I added videotaping to my interviews to assist with observations and to ensure conversations, facial expressions, hand gestures and body language could be identified at a later date to better assist with the rewriting of transcripts and recalling individual reactions to each question asked.
20. **Compilation of Transcriptions:** As stated earlier, transcripts were provided in a raw format to each participant and then analyzed for syntax and correction. Additionally, I looked to identify language that answered each research question.

21. **Weekly Advisor Meetings:** Each week I met with my advisor to review and update methodology. During our meetings, we reviewed several narrative inquiry methodologies for understanding. This was an ongoing process. Through the identification of significant points within the literature and participant transcripts, I was able to provide a timeline and process for the execution of this study.

22. **Conduct of Follow-Up Sessions with Participants:** This task was accomplished over several months. I called, emailed, and traveled back to the each institution to confirm and complete the interview process as needed.

23. **Development of Final Codes/Themes:** Codes and themes were identified during the transcription process. The review of participants’ transcripts assisted in the coding process and help identify themes via the answers provided.

24. **Relating of Participants Back to Non-Cognitive and Anti-Deficit Thinking Framework:** Upon review of all transcriptions, the goal of this study was to identify the proposed frameworks within the answers provided by the participants.

25. **Analysis and Discussion of Findings with Committee Chair and Advisors:** Each week and leading up to the defense I met with the co-chair and a committee member to provide them with updates on my progress and final review before full committee presentation. These meetings allowed for constant analysis of the completed work.
Implementation of the Research Process

Finally, as a form of qualitative research, narrative inquiry helps the researcher understand the experiences of the storytellers—allowing the researcher to enter a collaboration with the participants to relive and retell the stories and experiences of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While analyzing these stories, I became involved and now better understand the meaning that the narrators attached to their stories, and gained a glimpse into the ways they view themselves and their culture (Lieblich et al., 1998). Elliott (2005) stated that “it is only by focusing on individuals’ narrative constructions of their lives and experiences that we can come close to understanding more about the way that they reflexively construct and maintain their social identities” (p. 186). Narrative inquiry is viewed as an appropriate qualitative methodology for research involving lived experiences of African American males. A goal of this narrative inquiry was to understand the stories of the participant’s experiences by providing them with a space to tell their collective stories.
CHAPTER 4

FINDING OF NARRATIVES

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative research methodologies, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of African American males’ experiences as they persist collegiately. This chapter presents findings from seven African American male college students between the ages of 18 and 22 at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and Predominantly White University (PWI). The resulting narratives present the students’ personal stories of their college experiences. The narratives are in the young men’s own words, based on the descriptions each shared with me during our interview sessions. I have organized the narratives in a consistent format for ease of readability; however, each participant’s words are link occurrences in his educational experience unrestricted by time (Riessman, 1997, 2008).

The results centered on recurring themes related to their collegiate experiences as well as their individual perceptions of what contributed to their college success. Individual and collective findings emerged from the researcher’s analysis of each transcription and narrative. Their experiences within this study included their engagement in on-campus student organizations, community organizations, college event attendance, family involvement, engagement opportunities, collegiate preparation, non-academic campus services/resources, social life and experiences, employment, non-academic problems and or challenges, volunteerism, tutoring, advisement, and their individual mentee-mentor relationships. Participants shared the ways in which the following contributed to their success as college students: intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, relationships with campus personnel and family members,
positive and negative interactions with peers and staff and factors related to their ethnicity.

**Participant Introductions: Demographics and Background**

Each narrative will be preceded by a brief demographic overview of the participant, beginning with a description of the participant’s family/personal background, number of siblings if any, and long-term educational pursuits (Table 4.1). Table 4.1 will better assist the reader to understand the participants within the study. They are listed in the order of the young men’s narratives that follow:

Table 4.1

**Participant Introductions Demographics and Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calvin</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>Criminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ty</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Calvin:** is a twenty-one-year old senior majoring in biology who resides in South Florida. Calvin’s’ parents both live in Florida but are separated; his mother works as a nurse and father is a pest control salesman. He believes his parents’ combined income is between 40K and 60K a year. Calvin has one older sibling who recently completed his
undergraduate degree. He currently works 12 hours per week at a student help desk and is involved in one student organization on campus. Finally, Calvin hopes to attend medical school upon completion of his bachelor’s degree and become a genetic counselor.

**Oliver:** is a twenty-one-year old senior majoring in political science; he expects to attend a major university to complete his Ph.D. and become a United States Ambassador. His parents are both college graduates, who conceived him while they were matriculating through college. His mother is a case worker and father is a police detective. Their median family income is between 80K and 100K. His brother has completed his bachelor’s degree and his sister has completed an associate’s degree. Calvin is involved in several on-campus student organizations, is a budding thespian and is the co-captain of his college football team.

**Carl:** lives in a major east coast city; he describes his home as upper-middle-class. Both of his parents have attained undergraduate degrees with his mother having her master’s degree. His mother works as a manager in a hospital and father as a counselor. Each of his siblings, one sister and one brother, each have an associate’s and bachelor’s degree, respectively. Carl currently works in the residence life hall on campus, sixteen hours per week. Carl expects to complete his Ph.D. and wants to create a publication for students of color.

**Ty:** is currently in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on his campus. His personal goal is to become an Army officer and make a difference in the lives of solders. Ty’s family lives on the eastern seaboard; his father is not currently a part of his life. The median income in his home is between 20k and 40K. His mother works in sales and
currently has a high school diploma. Ty is involved in one student organization and has a work-study job at which he works 10 hours per week.

**Oscar:** is from a large southern city; he is an only child majoring in business. Both of his parents have advanced degrees with a medium income of over 100K. Oscar expects to pursue his MBA once his undergraduate work is complete. Oscar is very active in three student organizations on campus and works with several local community service organizations.

**Carter:** Both parents are bachelor’s degree recipients. His father is a social worker in the juvenile justice system and his mother is a registered nurse. Their combined household income is between 80 and 100K. Carter has a twin brother who currently attends the same university. He is not currently involved in any campus organizations, but is attempting to return to athletics as a football player and wants to pursue his Ph.D. in education upon graduation.

**Jamal:** is a twenty-two-year-old fifth-year senior whose father has completed a bachelor’s degree. His family income is over 100K and both of his parents work for a major telecommunications firm. Jamal currently works 20–26 hours per week but is involved in several on-campus student organizations. Jamal also wants to pursue a Ph.D. in artificial intelligence. Finally, he has one young sister who is currently in high school.

### Findings Clarified Through Participant Narratives

Each participant took part in individual one-on-one interviews. The data collection process took place over twelve weeks with re-reads and edits of individual transcripts completed over a five-month period. Research questions are identified in **bold** typeface; the following are their stories:
R1. How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

1. How have family members helped you during your attendance at York University or Chance University?

   **Calvin:** During my freshman year…my grandma was gracious enough to sign my loan paperwork for my first year so I could begin school…my dad has also helped me…my mom does what she can…she wishes she could do more… my parents just continue telling me to keep going and keep pursuing my education, my family provide me with, moral support!

   **Oliver:** My parents are always a good support system for me… whenever I need food, they always there… They're always there to support me… it's hard for them not to be supportive, (smiling)!

   **Carl:** I would say that my parents have supported me financially… coming from…where I'm from … we didn’t have many resources… I was fortunate enough that my family provided (some resources) so I never had to worry about eating at school…

   **Ty:** They (my parents) would call me every day and make sure I was going to class. You know, 'cause I'm first generation in our family… they want me to keep pushing myself… They make sure I'm taking care of business (in school). They just check in on me to make sure I am ok!

   **Oscar:** My parents have been a big part of it (my educational process) …they keep motivating me to do well… through…phone calls…whenever I'm struggling… either from classes or stress from outside the classroom or from the extra-curricular activities I am involved in… I usually go to my parents… and cousins regarding my
feelings…because they have been through it (college) they provide me with motivation...they help me get through certain situations I've been through!

Carter: my parents they are morning people…they make me get up early… they helped me take responsibility for myself…by taking control of my actions.

Jamal: My uncle and my father help me…my uncle has been a mentor to me since my freshman year… my father and mother support me… my mother understands what I am going through, as she’s currently completing her undergraduate work as well… I can talk to her… we talk about our different educational struggles. They are my backbone with regards to staying…focused (prideful grin)!!!!

R1. Sub-question 1. Researcher’s Reflections

Parental and family involvement has a direct influence upon the persistence of students collegiately. Harper (2012) noted the need for a strong support network to which a student can turn for encouragement and uplift during their time of matriculation. Parents and family members can also provide emotional stability and guidance. Additionally, Harper (2012) viewed the above as the shaping of African American males’ aspirations to attend college. In prior works by Bank, Slavings, and Biddle (1990), Fan and Williams (2010), Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein (2005), all agreed with the belief in a parental and family influence on student persistence. Each collectively noted the effects of family involvement, engagement and motivation as factors in student persistence.
2. Explain why you decided to attend York University or Chance University?

Calvin: Because of the name recognition of the school… I just wanted to get as far away from home as possible… I wanted to get away from my family… just run away from the situation I was in… I wanted to get as far away as possible from where I was and start anew!!!

Oliver: That's a crazy story…I thought I was smart, but I was just lazy. I thought if I played football, somebody (a school) was going to give me everything I wanted. Then I got to my junior year in high school and I had 1.9 GPA…I just didn't want to do any work. I thought because I played (football) and I was good that a college would just sign me, however nobody wanted me because of my poor grades…as my friends were getting offers (no school would take a chance on me because of my grades). Then Chance University took a chance on me, they put me in an after school (high school) program to help me strengthen myself academically! Once my GPA improved they offered me a football scholarship on national signing day… this school believed in me and gave me an opportunity when others would not, I feel obligated to reward them for their faith in me. I currently have a 3.49 and will be graduating this year and will attend grad school, all because of their belief in me.

Carl: I came here on a 7th grade school trip, for a Science Expo, the view that I saw from the basketball stadium was, “phenomenal 2.0” it was very inspirational…I said “I have to go there no matter what” (with an exited voice) …I told myself after that trip that no matter how my grades were or my SAT scores were, I was going to York University… I just committed to attending this school.
Ty: Well, I decided to attend Chance University because it was close to home; as a first-generation college student…my parents did not want me to go too far away… they wanted me to stay close to home to attend college… so they could come and see me if I needed help or when I needed them. Because of our decision, I don’t have to travel very far to see my family. Additionally, this school fits into our budget… hopefully after I graduate… paying back student loans would not be too difficult . . . attending a school that was affordable was important as well (while rubbing his thumb and forefingers together to signify money)!

Oscar: I visited the business school during one of their summer programs “which I truly enjoyed” … I applied to the business program and was offered a scholarship to attend…I also met with one of the university’s vice presidents who just happened to show me around the campus, he has now become one of my mentors… financial-wise it just worked out. I decided to come to York University because of the business school . . . comfort-wise. I felt great in the environment. I felt like they would prepare me…for the real world….

Carter: I came because I was comfortable when I came on a visit…I was raised in this area… my grandparents live around the corner…. my mom and dad wanted me to come here…so it was either go here or go out of state to school. I chose to stay in state and attend the same school my brother attends!

Jamal: Well I've always wanted to attend York University since I was a child…it came down to the application process… I applied to several schools…coming here seemed to just work out for me…I look at it in the sense… this is the way the universe wanted it to work out. I ended up in the atmosphere in which I was supposed to be in….
have enjoyed the experience thus far…I believe this was the right choice at the end of the day.

**R1. Sub-question 2. Researcher’s Reflections**

The choice of instructional institution to attend can be in part based upon several factors: financial nexus, school proximity, instructional programming, scholarship offerings, pre-college programs, name recognition, future economic considerations or academic support programs. According to St John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005), and supported by Cabrera, Nora and Castaneda (1992), the ability to pay for college is a variable that can influence academic integration and persistence. Self-efficacy, initially discussed by Bandura (1997), is a distinguishing factor regarding school choice. Jamal’s statement, “coming here seemed to just work out for me”, speaks to his sense of self-fulling human agency and his belief that all was right with the world because of his attendance of York University. Self-efficacy can be realized within each participant’s response.

**2a. Follow up: How do you feel about your decision currently?**

**Calvin:** I'm very happy with my decision… being here has made me realize I enjoy being surrounded by peers who look like me… I did not enjoy feeling like the minority in my own home…coming here, kind of broke me out of my thought patterns…when I look back I was a token within my family…my outside family…the people I consider my family…my adoptive white mother…the last time I visited her it didn't go very well…she blamed my thought processes on my attendance at a liberal college…she says my attitude has changed…I believe it is because I have been exposed to different knowledge by attending York University… it's just something that needed to
happen…I've become aware… aware of myself and surroundings…I'm supposed to be here…this is a safer environment for me!

Oliver: I love my decision…if I would not have come here…I would not have had the opportunity to get an education… they believed in me… I can't show my gratitude enough! That’s why I try to stay in the books and do everything I can to make the university proud of me... But I love… I love being here.

Carl: York University has played a pivotal role in my success…it has helped me in many ways such as me finding my identity…finding what I'm passionate about. Being surrounded by older men who are father figures…I never had that in my life.

Ty: I think it was a great decision because… I like the college, it’s an HBCU…so I'm around…others who look like me? I can relate too many of my peers…I'm here because…my major is challenging…it's easy for me to like it here.

Oscar: I feel the same way I felt when applying to York University… I made the right decision…this semester a little stressful, because of the course workload but I feel like I am flying with eagles! I believe York has helped me throughout my time here. This school has helped me develop opportunities…with different companies and prepared me for summer internships. If I had to do it over again… I would still apply to York University!!!

Carter: I feel like I made a good decision…I wasn't going to attend college initially… I just didn't feel like I would be able to make it through college…because of my experiences in high school, which was up and down academically…my mom and I sat down…we talked about me attending college and what I could achieve once I graduated…she stated “by completing school more and more doors would be open for me
when I get out of college” … it made me think about my long term goals…as my educational prospects began to materialize and soak in… I changed my mind, and I wanted to attend college…..I am happy I did!

**Jamal:** This was a great choice for me…after I graduate, I plan on attending grad school to complete my master’s degree… the atmosphere here is fantastic because of the diversity and the countless resources on campus that I can take advantage of. Overall this is a fun atmosphere, which allows me to… focus on school… I also have outlets to enjoy myself… while I'm here!

**R1. Sub-question 2a. Researcher’s Reflections**

Acceptance and school choice can be a daunting decision for most students. Numerous academic opportunities are available, whether a traditional college or an online learning environment. According to John, Paulsen, and Starkey (1996), the process of choosing a college or enrolling in college is like viewing the branches of a tree. Each postulate college choice and persistence are interconnected and part of the broader process of student choice. Each participant stated, he had made a good decision or good choice; however, that decision was based upon the positive support provided to each participant by a parent, family member, mentor or friend. These supportive mechanisms are a part of the branches of the tree that assist with the overall persistence of the student.

**3. Explain how important is it for you to graduate from York University or Chance University?**

**Calvin:** It's extremely important for me to graduate…I can't even imagine how good it's going to feel to walk across that stage… graduation will change my life expectancy… my future children’s lives… graduating from college… could change their
direction one hundred-fold…its more than my parents could have imagined for me…

graduating from here is very, very important for me and my future!

**Oliver:** Well, it goes back to me feeling obligated…my school provided me the opportunity to make something of myself…this university gave me a chance, who am I to squander it!!! Additionally, I love making my family proud…I love telling my mother and father about all the great things I have accomplished. Although I enjoy playing football…my long-term prospects of success lie in my ability to graduate…I need that degree to move onto the next chapter in my life… it is vitally important…

**Carl:** Graduation is essential… when you here about the statistics of black men who are incarcerated and who have unfortunately gotten in trouble with the law… and died at the hands of police brutality… I owe it to them, and those who have come before me and sacrificed, so I could go to school, graduate and excel! Graduating from college will provide me and my family with increased economic and social stability.

**Ty:** It is very important…graduation will improve my family dynamics and hopefully improve our futures! It allows me to become a productive member of society…and seek better employment opportunities…completing my education will also give additional economic opportunities for my future family.

**Oscar:** Graduating from my school is very important…I have family members who have not completed college…although my parents finished school…I am afraid to end up like other members of my family…I think graduation is very important…as it would be one of the first steps I could take, career wise to better myself…It allows me to pursue my goals of getting my Masters in Business Administration (MBA)…and them my Juris Doctorate degree (JD).
Carter: I want to make my parents proud…and do it for them… I don't want to settle for less…that's not the kind of person that I was raised to be…especially from our dad's perspective…my parents had my brother and I during my mother’s freshman year in college and they completed their course work and graduated…so I have no excuses!

Jamal: it's very important I've already invested five years…so this degree will go a long way…because of the alumni network (at my school) who live around the world… my prospects (workplace opportunities) will go up once I complete my degree…my degree will open doors…and allow me to network with other alumnus at the highest level of corporate, educational and governmental workplaces…I believe this university is one of the top schools that will carry me throughout my life!

R1. Sub-question 3. Researcher’s Reflections

Individual motivation to attend college is influenced by cultural values (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). Their motivation to attend college can be based on personal interest, intellectual curiosity, and the desire to attain a rewarding career (Niu, 2013; Toldson, Brown, & Sutton, 2009). Each of the participants had different motivations, Oliver noted the feeling of obligation and his desire to make his family proud! Carl ‘owed it to them… and to those who have come before me and sacrificed, so I could go to school’. Each of these principles is based upon the desire to persist. The self-determination to graduate is a learned process, developed through the consistent interaction among family, peers, mentors, and academic and non-academic support mechanisms (Allen, 1999; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012).
3a. Follow Up: Have you ever dropped out of college altogether? If so why?

Calvin: I thought about it…finances were my greatest concern…however my financial educational outlook has improved… when I thought about dropping out it was because I was concerned about how to pay for my education! The remaining participants indicated they had never considered dropping out of school.

R1. Sub-question 3a. Researcher’s Reflections

Although the above question reviews the desire to stay in school, each participant noted that he had never felt the need to drop out of school, except Calvin, who indicated that finances had been his greatest concern. I find great significance in each answer. Dropping out of college has many demographic factors, with finances being one of many deterrents (Abel, & Deitz, 2014). With the sharp increase in college tuition and the need for additional financial support from parents and family members, students are increasingly borrowing monies from private lenders to subsidize the cost of their education (Belley, & Lochner, 2007). Although President Obama saw college as an “economic imperative that every family in America has to be able to afford”, the cost of attending college is increasing, and students are borrowing more than ever to finance the investment (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013).

4. In what ways have you taken advantage of the campus resources and engagement opportunities York University or Chance University has to offer, i.e…. nonacademic support groups or organizations (athletics, student support groups, fraternities, honor societies etc….?)
Calvin: I have met several other students who are in my classes and in several organizations that I am involved in. Interviewer: What’s the name of your organization? It’s called Writers Organized to Represent Diverse Stories. I also work as a resident assistant on my campus. This position has allowed me to be engaged with my peers and develop good listening skills. These on campus opportunities have greatly influenced my ability to succeed on campus.

Oliver: I would like to start with athletics…I wouldn't be here without it...
Athletics has provided me with the opportunity to pay for my tuition and books…regarding non-academic support and other campus resources athletics provides me with everything I need…I've taken advantage of all the academic and non-academic programs my school offers!

Carl: We have a diversity resource center that I go to every other week, I meet with my counselor to discuss jobs opportunities, educational needs and personal concerns that I may have…I see my counselors as role models, they help me out a lot…I am also involved in several student organizations on campus…these orgs help with my creativity and have allowed me to grow as a student and person…I have also worked with the chief diversity officer on campus…he has helped me gain access to programs and initiatives on campus that are designed to enhance student needs on campus.

Ty: Due to the fact, my major requires me to complete plenty of math…I go to the, student success center… They helped me find tutors…members of the staff are very helpful…because of their help my math scores have improved…I also play on an intramural flag football team it keeps me occupied when I am not in class or the library…my school attempts to engage students and get them involved in the many
campus activities that are offered, i.e... Intramurals, student organizations and the many events that take place during activity hour on campus, such as talks, short plays and guest speakers on campus.

**Oscar**: Regarding resources I am involved in... National Association of Black Accountants (NABA)... I'm on the E-Board... I'm the head of professional development initiatives... I set up one-on-one connections with different companies where we develop events for student participation... for example, we are working with Proctor and Gamble later in the semester to do... resume-building and interviewing workshops... with the hope of opening doors for students regarding internships... I'm also a mentor in UPLIFT... I am also in BMLS, Black Men Leadership Symposium. I'm the secretary in our group... these campus organizations have helped me grow as a person and allowed me to give back to our community.

**Carter**: As an athlete who wants to be a part of the football team as a walk-on, I have been involved with the athletic department mentorship and academic programs that help students better prepare for university life as an athlete.

**Jamal**: I haven't used too many resources outside of the diversity office... I have used several of the tutoring services that my school offers... I am currently working with an instructor on a research project that is related to my major... although we are completing academic work... he has been a mentor to me outside of the classroom as well... he has been extremely helpful regarding my personal growth... I love to take advantage of the professors on campus because they can open other doors for you and expand your knowledge and experience.
R1. Sub-question 4. Researcher’s Reflections

Involvement in extra-curricular activities on campus for many students opens the door to engagement, involvement and leadership opportunities on many campuses. Foreman and Retallick (2012) believed that extra-curricular involvement can result in increased leadership skills, campus engagement and increased social development. Each participant noted engagement in a non-cognitive or extra-curricular activity on his campus. Oscar noted his involvement in the Black Men Leadership Symposium; Ty’s attendance of the student success center had a profound effect on his social and academic achievement. Additionally, and according to Comeaux and Harrison (2011), researchers have spent a considerable time studying college athletes, advancing understanding of student-athletes’ and their success in postsecondary education. The role of non-academic support groups and organizations is designed to assist student transition from high school to college and then from college to the workforce or graduate school (Harper, 2012; Knight & Marciano, 2013).

5. What things about York University or Chance University helped you stay continually enrolled?

Calvin: The faculty and staff…last semester my parents and I were struggling to pay off my bill… I received an email from the bursar’s office two weeks before my bill was due, stating we have a scholarship that you qualify for… then I get a call from the staff members (in the bursar’s office) boss saying I have found some additional funds because the scholarship only covered half of your tuition…he said he wanted to make sure I had enough money to get me to my senior year so I could walk across the stage!!!!
With their efforts, I could not have remained in school, I appreciated all that the office did for me!!

Oliver: Everybody I've met, or encountered has been very helpful…my counselors and advisers want to help me…they are always willing to provide a helping hand, they have been an excellent support system… why would you leave a support system like that? As I said previously, nobody ever gave me this type of opportunity… I wouldn't trust anybody else with my education.

Carl: I believe it is the challenge of working hard to be a success at this college…you must accept the challenge to stay here… if we want to achieve something, it requires us to grow up fast. My generation was built upon the sense of entitlement… I realized that in my first semester, we are not guaranteed a degree. The only thing you're guaranteed is student debt…you must put your best foot forward, and you should continue to thrive…this makes you do what it takes to be successful…

Ty: I think it’s my resident assistants (RA)…they check up on me every now and then…they make sure that I am going to class, help me with my assignments…make sure I keep my grades up…some people don't have that much support…but the R.A.s here…they check on you often…they helped me find tutors If I need them…that makes you want to stay here…they are very supportive…I also have family that lives nearby which helps me stay focused.

Oscar: Although I believe it should be more diversity within the black community on campus, it’s very tight-knit… the diversity and cultural centers on campus are very helpful…they allow me to have a safe space to go to when I have
concerns…coming here was a little different diversity wise it’s a challenge but several of the black male programs on campus have been very helpful…

**Carter:** I like the architecture of my campus…several buildings are being remodeled and new buildings are being constructed…although this not the main reason I choose to attend…the university’s efforts to modernize the campus and the support programs are what keeps me here… Everybody works together and seem to have the same goal, to help (the student) graduate!!!

**Jamal:** I like the diverse atmosphere on campus…along with the different cultures and backgrounds and perspectives of the students who go here…watching how others cope with their environment has been an important aspect of my personal growth…we all have different backgrounds… I believe, being here surrounded with individuals from different areas of the world and all walks of life has motivated me…being here has allowed me to network and be involved in many of the day-to-day campus activities.

**R1. Sub-question 5. Researcher’s Reflections**

Student achievement and students’ ability to persist can be determined by engagement opportunities with: peers, faculty, staff, coaches and various administrative officials on campus (Braskamp, Trautvetter, & Ward, 2016) (see Figure 4.1). Each participant identified a relevant reason for staying continually enrolled. Several mentioned staff, the diverse atmosphere on campus and the beauty of the architecture and new construction on campus. Carl noted the challenge of working hard to achieve his goals and the self-determination he must exhibit to be successful on campus. Each participant showed the grit needed to achieve his academic and personal pursuits (Strayhorn, 2014). Finally,
Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, and Abel (2013) stated that retention and persistence are direct correlates; the impact of a student remaining in school can be traced back to the individual yet personal relationships he may have throughout his academic career.

**Research Question One:** How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

![Diagram](attachment:diagram.png)

**Figure 4.1.** Participants Anti-Deficit Framework Coding

**R. 2.** How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

1. What social or organizational experiences have improved your preparation to attend York University or Chance University?
**Calvin:** My parents were the driving force behind my preparation to attend college…they constantly told me, you’re going to college and you’re going to get an education…they motivated me and made sure I would get here and did what it took to graduate…in order to better myself as well as my future family. I did not have much time for social organizations in high school my parents are strict, they kept a watchful eye over me (laughing)!

**Oliver:** Prior to graduation from high school I was involved in a Summer Bridge Program that was offered by my current colleges athletic program…they provided core classes, several seminars and campus tours…when school actually started I felt prepared and knew what was happening around campus…I actually knew where I was going on campus. I also completed several classes and began school with some classroom experience…my sister goes here as well and she struggled when she first arrived… she did not know were several building and classes were located…. I feel like the bridge program helped me prepare for college life.

**Carl:** I was involved in the black community i.e…. church, and local community events, I was also involved in several student organizations in high school…they helped me prepare for my collegiate experience.

**Ty:** When I was in high school, I was involved in several clubs… I played sports… I was on the track, football, soccer and cross country teams…I was in ROTC. These programs helped me get ready to come here… I want to be a leader…be involved in student government on campus…I was the vice president for our class in high school which taught me about leadership… in high school, all the sports and organizations that I was involved in helped me become a more well-rounded person.
Oscar: Prior to coming to this York University… my parents put me in a boarding school program. It was a summer program for middle high school students. I took college prep and Advanced Placement (AP) classes…I think it helped me…I was away from my family all summer…away from my family made me grow up…learn how to be on my own and be independent, and learn how to rely on myself and not rely on my parents…for money or clothes. It taught me how to be on my own…I also visited York University’s summer business program as well, which helped me find my way around campus… it just helped me prepare for campus life.

Carter: I feel comfortable here…I grew up in this area … this is kind of environment. That feels like home to me….

Jamal: With regards to high school, I was the co-captain of my track team, this leadership role helped me better understand how to work with others. I was also a member of the College of Physicians … they helped me find a mentor at Carl University (pseudonym) were I did a research… this experience helped me better understand what I wanted to do in college! I was also a part of, People-to-People Student Ambassadors Program…this organization allowed me to travel outside of the country. I went to Europe…having that overseas, experience exposed me to other possibilities that life had to offer and understand that there is more to the world than the United States…by having these experiences I got a different outlook on life and began to see professional and personal experience through a different lens and perspective.

R2. Sub-question 1. Researcher’s Reflections

Preparing for collegiate entry and admission can be a daunting task for most students. The transition from high school to college involves admittance and financial aid
applications, scholarship inquiries, pre-college travel planning, and ongoing conversations with counselors, family members, mentors and friends. However, prior to admittance to college; preparation begins in the K–12 arena. The participants noted family involvement, AP classes taken, athletics, community and student organizations and Summer Bridge programming as a means to better prepare them to attend college!

The supportive nature of pre-college programming can enhance the social and academic experiences of African American males prior to and during their K–12 and collegiate experience (Gullatt & Jan, 2003; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Per Todd (2014), pre-college programs play a role in helping combat achievement gap issues as these relate to African American males.

2. **Which non-academic campus services/resources have you taken advantage of at York University or Chance University?**

   **Calvin:** The diversity center on campus was the place I went for help…it was my sophomore year when the Program Assistant from my dorm suggested that I meet a counselor in the diversity center on campus…she took me there…and ever since that day, he's helped me…and kept me here, even though there was a time where we didn't even know if I was going to come back…but we *persisted*…I feel like if it wasn't for the diversity center…I don't know if I would've, stayed here!!!

   **Oliver:** It was football for me… I've definitely taken advantage of the athletic programming offered…I've said it previously I definitely would not be here without it. I'd probably be working somewhere to be honest with you. The school provided me with this opportunity…I've used it (athletics) to get my academics straight!
Carl: I would say student organizations are very essential... I believe the more student organizations you are a part of... the more you can learn from different people. I tried to do my best to get involved with organizations that have diversity in both culture and thought... this allows me to understand our differences and understand how people feel about different topics and ideas.

Ty: I enjoy the activities we have in the Student Center... when I go there, I meet new people... I make new friends every day... I'm not just hanging out with the same people... I actually get to know people from around the campus... when I do need help, I know what office and person(s) I need to talk with for assistance!

Interviewer: Can you name any of the activities you mentioned? Well every Friday we have a Fun Friday activity from 12 to 2 pm for students who are not in class. Everybody out there... You can meet new people listen to music... we've had guest speakers during this time... our President has stopped by to interact with us as well... it's a time to make new friends and find out what is going on campus.

Oscar: Resources-wise, it's the diversity center on campus... they have helped me take advantage of all the opportunities our school has to offer... scholarships, tutoring a place to study... our campus cultural center has also been very supportive. I take advantage of that office as much as possible... academically-wise or social-wise... I've definitely go to cultural center... it's a very comfortable place to be... I also go to our multicultural leader in my dorm... he has helped me immensely... he has helped me open doors to different opportunities on campus and helped me adjust to living here!!!

Carter: I have not been involved with many resources on campus outside of what athletics offers. I go to their tutoring and academic training sessions for several classes.
Jamal: many of the student organizations on campus host their own events in which they provide students with a place to study during mid-term and finals week… the different fraternities also have events in which I attend as well…my organization which I'm a part of Progressive Men for Empowerment in Reverence…also host social events which help students stay focused on their studies… as well as prepare for their finals and other exams they have.

R2. Sub-question 2. Researcher’s Reflections

Non-academic programing initiatives offered by colleges and universities play a critical role in retention, persistence and graduation (Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004). Although many programs rely on traditional academic factors to monitor at-risk students, non-academic programs are a staple of educational institutions’ ability to maintain a cohesive bond between the student and the university (Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014; Sedlacek, 2004). Student services programing, diversity centers and student organization are a part of the fabric of each university and play an essential role in the development of each student. Carl and Oscar mentioned their involvement in their school’s diversity center; Jamal and Carl thought their association with their student organizations enhanced their abilities to matriculate at their respective universities. All participants gave credence to their universities’ ability to provide programs that, through their participation, provided for personal and professional growth outside of their classroom experiences.
3. **Tell me about your experiences and motivating factors that have influenced you to continue to matriculate at York University or Chance University?**

**Calvin:** I go back to my childhood experience…much of what I learned comes from watching my parents and family…I watched the personal and professional choices my parents made. My mom is a Nurse, my dad has a degree in Electrical Engineering, they didn't enjoy what they were doing after they finished school…which was a source for some struggles at home when I was growing up…however, they taught me to do what I love, regardless of what others may think…they said if it made me happy that's what matters… they would say “do what you enjoy” … I am very grateful for what they instilled within me. Although it didn’t make sense at the time (laughing) it does now!!! It just proves to me that doing what you love matters more than the any monetary satisfaction could bring.

**Oliver:** The people around me have given me all the motivation I need… my family and friends have truly helped me stay here…during my freshman year, once I figured out I could do the work and had the ability to compete both athletically and academically there was no way I was leaving…I've never been a quitter… it doesn't matter what it is I have to put in the effort, if others can do it I realized I could to!!!

**Carl:** I understand where I come from…I have found my identity… I read about my ancestors and where we come from . . . and realize that we didn't start off as slaves. That was an epiphany for me…from there additional readings sparked a consciousness and calling…I realized that there where men in my life that I want to be like. . . I admired their professions and how they have helped me, their efforts motivated me. . . knowing
people who have already gone through this (educational) process…and are now in a position to help my peers is inspiring…watching what these African American males do at my school motivates me!

**Ty:** Being a first-generation college student is motivational… I wanted to come here and do my best for me and my family…no one in my family had had this experience, it’s important that I do well because my little brothers are watching… I want them to go to college…hopefully they understand what it takes to attend college and that they will follow in my footsteps… they motivate me to do what I do! I have utilized student support services on campus… I have gone back to my high school counselors for help along the way…many of them worked with me and my parents…they help me get here and I will be forever grateful for their tips and advice…I would never want to let them down!

**Oscar:** I think some of the experiences I’ve had here are very similar to most black males on a majority campus…some of the micro-aggressions I have faced are just straight disrespectful… one of the engaging events that took place on campus was… the Black and Latino Male Symposium we had last year…the whole event was important and motivating…having so many black and brown men speak about their experiences, and their lives and careers really helped me get through the semester…the emphasis that was placed on a black male achievement got me though my challenges…programs like this helped me feel better about the black community on campus.

**Carter:** Family members…watching them graduate… from different colleges seeing them now…seeing how comfortable they are because of the choices they’ve made…just getting (those inspirational conversations that provide a sense of direction)
talks from my family… asking questions…talking with my older siblings and older cousins has motivated me!

**Jamal:** My motivation comes from individuals that I surrounded myself with…I would say those persons have a focused mindset…they understand what they want to do…they understand what they need to do and then get it done! Surrounding myself with the individuals who are motivated…. helps motivate me as well, we feed off of each other… I believe when you surround yourself with good people hopefully their positive energy rubs off on you!!

**R2. Sub-question 3. Researcher’s Reflections**

The supportive nature of family and friends in the lives of each participant is a motivating factor that enhanced their willingness to matriculate! Their positive peer and family inner circle influenced their diligence and tenacity to succeed (Paul-Dixon, 2007; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008; Warde, 2008)! Furthermore, Warde (2008) stated that “family support is likely the most critical contributor to helping African American male students to successfully overcome some of the obstacles to academic success, such as cultural and social isolation and fears of academic success” (p. 60). Additionally, positive Black male imagery is also a key element regarding matriculation. Oscar indicated that having so many Black and Brown men speak about their experiences, and their lives and careers really helped him get through the semester. This identifier will be discussed further in chapter five. However, throughout my conversation with each young man, the student spoke of the importance of having more Black males on their campus.
4. Tell me about your social life and experiences, i.e., dating, social clubs/organizations in which you are/were involved…

Calvin: During my freshman year learned about moderation. When I arrived, I had never had freedom, per se, I actually had responsibilities when I was in high school. I was helping pay bills. There were times when I was the only person in my house working. That didn't really leave a lot of time for a social life outside of school or to be engaged in athletics. When I started college and only had to worry about school…I kind of went crazy…I partied like every weekend except for Sundays as mom wasn’t having it (laughing)! I definitely went out a lot my freshman year…during my sophomore year I stopped because I saw what it was doing to me academically, my grades really suffered…I got involved in several student organizations…they opened my mind to the possibilities of success. I developed new friendships, these student orgs changed my social life which enhanced my academic pursuits…my experiences as this York University has been based on relationship building and engagement. Just as in high school, I have been dating the same person since I came here…this has provided stability in my life.

Oliver: As far as my social life I'm involved the Industry Theatre Company, we put on plays…they've actually given me several opportunities…I was just casted into my first professional play by my director!!! Dating was kind of hard at first as my girlfriend went to a different college when we graduated from high school. The distance between us was tough to deal with…she is a biology major so she's always busy…always doing homework…we mutually decided it was in our best interest to focus on school in an attempt to get ourselves together academically…when you can’t communicate it’s hard to
have a relationship. Since we broke up dating has not been high on my priority list…I tried to get involved with another person but quickly realized that I still cared about my previous girlfriend…that relationship last one month…I felt like I was wasting my time…dating for me is to complicated right now.

Parties? Yeah, I go to plenty of parties but it's more of a… how can I say this? Sometimes I'll be in the mood, sometimes I won't. Because I'm a sore loser…when we lose a football game I just prefer to stay in my room and chill…so much of going out depends on my mood…If I’m in a good mood I'll go out…if I'm in a bad mood… I try and figure out what I need to do to put myself in a good mood…I am always looking to accomplish something in life…sometimes partying takes away from feeling like I have accomplished something.

**Carl:** I'm very involved on campus…with different organizations… I think…being involved in student orgs…has been good for me because I better understand how things really work on campus…during my down time…I do a lot of reading as well. I feel like…the more we…understand…the more we can change the world and understand different viewpoints…I just want to be change that I want to see.

**Ty:** Well, I'm a very social person…. I enjoy talking with others… when I got here, I didn't think I was going to make any friends, but during my freshman year…I made more friends than I thought I was going to make… I actually go out and I meet people…when I walk on campus each day…I would speak to everybody and ask…what's your name… where are you from...what high school did you graduate from…Do you play any sports? In an attempt to…just make friends!!! I'm not the big party-type-of-guy…. I don't like going out a lot. I been to two parties since I've been here… I just don't
party…I like to have fun with friends…get together, play video games, go out and throw
the football around…play some sports. Three weeks ago I got involved in a student
club… this club monitors student activities in the dorms…we come up with events for
students to be involved with. I joined this club 'cause…I wanted to be involved with
creative ideas that would help students succeed… our goal is to bring students
together…help them make new friends and be socially engaged on campus.

**Oscar:** I am involved in several social clubs on campus… we just hang out and
help others in our academic departments with tutoring and mentoring… partying it’s
inevitable we are in college!!! Dating-wise I am still working on it (laughing.) Okay.
[More laughter.] … Still working on that one; I think it’s definitely social clubs and then
partying. My social life on my campus is great it’s a fun place to be!!!

**Carter:** I have a big group of friends…we have known one another since 6th
grade… we all graduated from high school together and are now in college… we all
made an agreement to do the best we could in college and encourage one
another…socially we are very engaged in each other’s success…although we do not
attend one another’s schools we have been very connected…during our first two years in
school…we talk monthly as a group and encourage each other and talk about our success,
failures and dreams …Since my brother and I both attend Chance University, we are
involved in clubs and student organizations that are related to our majors…we party a
little bit but not much…We are too busy trying to set a positive example for our younger
brother and sister with the hope that they will follow in our footsteps.

**Jamal:** I am a member of or Student Minority Advisory Recruiting Team on
campus. I attended Achievers Weekend prior to coming to here…that's the reason why I
wanted to attend…I was also involved with Spend a Fall Day programs that help high school student better understand their transition to college…aside from partying on campus…it's definitely a lively atmosphere to say the least…[Laughter] it's definitely, enjoyable… it has also opened my eyes to… real world experiences regarding being safe and mindful about the amount of alcohol I consume and individuals that I surround myself with… and the environment that I party in…I definitely learned a lot from that while having fun. I've also been a part of the Air Force ROTC…which help me mature during my freshman and sophomore year…being involved in the strenuous and tedious training and repetitive drills…helped me build up my leadership and responsibilities…I learned how to carry myself with the proper mannerisms, the ROTC has truly helped me grow up! The dating atmosphere…it's interesting [laughs]…to say the least, with the diverse crowd we have here on this campus…I definitely believe it's a great environment for people to figure out who they are as individuals and what they are actually interested in regarding their long-term goals.

R2. Sub-question 4. Researcher’s Reflections

The social experience of students can take many trajectories, some constructive and others deleterious. The opportunity to network with peers and engage in socially constructive initiatives can have a profound effect on their ability to establish lifelong relationships (Brown, 2009; D'Augelli, & Hershberger, 1993; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002) (see Figure 4.2). Although Calvin enjoyed partying, he began to understand his need to moderate his social life in order to remain in school. Oliver came to understand that a long-distance relationship was hindering his ability to concentrate and be effective both academically and athletically. Ty’s decision not to party and join a club within his dorm
helped him meet friends in an environment that was comfortable and to his liking. Carter stayed connected with his middle and high school friends as a means to stay encouraged and supportive of their personal and academic pursuits. Although each participant had some form of social interaction outside of the classroom, their participation in their individual subgroups provided each with a sense of community (Sedlacek, 2004). Finally, Jamal spoke of the maturing effect of ROTC upon his leadership and responsibilities and the proper way to carry himself publicly. The maturing effects of each social engagement opportunity speaks to the narrative of their interest in social and political issues, self-efficacy, and a positive disposition (van den Wijngaard, Beusaert, Segers, & Gijselaers, 2015).

**Research Question Two:** How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

![Figure 4.2. Participants Non-Cognitive Variables Coding](image-url)
R.3. What social challenges have African American males faced that have helped you persist at HBCUs or PWIs?

1. In your opinion how can York University or Chance University influence and improve student concerns and social conditions on your campus?

**Calvin:** Our university just hired a diversity coordinator… she teaches classes on diversity to faculty and staff. I don't know how much she does with the students, but it seems to me that the university is attempting to focus on the changing diverse needs of our campus community. However, the diversity within the faculty is non-existent, we need to do a better job of hiring black and brown faculty members on our campus…having the ability to identify with those who look like me on campus helps with diversity in education and the thought processes of those in the majority…I have a biology teacher who is an African American male…I can identify with him…he speaks to my needs as a minority student on a majority campus… he inspires me like President Obama has inspired me! Although there has been a backlash against minorities across the country (i.e., Ferguson, Mo; Dallas, Texas and New York) …in order to improve the minority student situations here the university needs to increase black faculty on campus.

**Oliver:** I would say that those at the top (Presidents and Vice Presidents and Deans) should be engaged with the students…getting emails are fine but it would be nice if they would set up forums to address the students periodically…it would be nice to see the President involved with the student’s concerns… I would like to meet and talk with him in an open setting…I have spoken with professors about how previous presidents were everywhere and really involved with students…I believe other students would look forward to connecting with the President if he was approachable…I know he has a busy
schedule, but it should never be too busy to pay attention to the people that actually attend our school.

**Carl:** I think faculty and staff could be more pro-active and approachable… in order for them to play a positive role regarding student's success, they have to make some type of sacrifice. I have a counselor who spends additional hours weekly working with our black male group on campus… he makes a sacrifice for black men… to ensure black male voices are being heard…that's the only way that we will be able to alleviate and remedy different situations if they (faculty and staff) are playing an active role in our success.

**Ty:** At Chance University, we have an activity hour where students can participate in social events on campus… we also have the Student Success Center where students who are struggling academically can get additional help like mentoring and tutoring… we need more places like this on campus! I would like to see more job training and internship opportunities on campus as well.

**Oscar:** I want more faculty of color on campus… specifically in our academic areas… not just in the advising areas … in my college we lack diversity in the professoriate we just don’t have enough to go around…for example the majority of my classes I have taken had one (1) person of color that has taught them. Personally, I think having professors who I can identify with…helps with the thought process of others (the majority) in the classroom…I also think we need to have better relationships with the police on campus…recently a robbery took place and the police said there was an unknown black male who might have been the perpetrator…the cops just began to check black men on campus and downtown randomly…I know some of the brothers who were
stopped. . . they felt harassed and actually did not fit the description of the guy they were looking for… this happens to often here… So, I think having better relationships with police would also help conditions on campus.

**Carter:** No, Sir. I mean everything's just fine. I just enjoy being in this space, I am treated fairly and do the same to others. I wish there were black males who teach classes!

**Jamal:** with regard to the university they can motivate students by showing support for Black Lives Movement…it would go a long way with students if the university (administration) showed they actually cared…and not separate themselves from our movement… the school could state … we respect how you feel…share our views and support our protest with regards to bringing awareness to campus… I believe that the university should be more involved . . . by showing students that we are here for you, and that we should work together to accomplish our goals.

**R3. Sub-question 1. Researcher’s Reflections**

One common theme expressed by each participant was a desire for greater interpersonal relationships with faculty and staff. Halawah (2006) postulated that “student-faculty informal interpersonal relationships were measured in six components: academic integration, peer relations, social integration, informal faculty relations, faculty concern, and student commitment” (p. 670). Each were interdependent but positively designed to affect student outcomes and performance. The development of constructive relationships for African American males is an educational imperative; these informal relations can enhance or hinder students’ personal and professional growth (Harper, 2012; Sedlacek, 2004). Additionally, Calvin, Carter and Oscar expressed a need for
additional Black faculty on campus. Their concern led me to review the seminal work of Smith (2004), "Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-civil rights era", where he discussed the challenges African American faculty, staff and students face on a predominately White campus relative to their White counterparts.

2. When you encounter social or non-academic problems and/or challenges, do you have someone who will listen to you and help? Describe who that person might be?

Calvin: I talk with my girlfriend...there is a gap in our communication at times but she is always there for me. I talk with my father and mother as well... but my inclination is to not follow their guidelines at times, based upon me not living in their home anymore...I take what they say to me more as suggestions now because I do not live under their roof. My father sees me as a growing adult...my mom is reluctant to let go at this point... I explain to her that I'm growing up, however, I have followed their advice periodically and take it to heart as needed...it’s crazy to see that my dad makes so much sense (Laughing) now...when it comes to social and academic matters I talk with my brother...although he is younger...we kind of switched places after high school. I reverted to the younger sibling and he the older sibling because he was the first in the family to move away to go to school... he has been the most consistent person in my life...whenever I have any problem or I need to talk about something I usually go to my little brother.

Oliver: I talk with my parents, I also talk with my mentor when I have a problem or concern...I talk with my peers when I have relationship concerns... nine times out of
I would listen to their advice…my political science adviser has given me several opportunities to work with him… he talks to me like I'm his son… I have watched him shed a tear because he knows the struggles I was going through when I initially came here, he always say, “you have gone from a 1.9 to a 3.5 GPA I am so proud of you…he really means the world to me!!!

**Carl:** I would definitely say my advisor… has been very help and supportive… anytime something's going on…I immediately contact him and ask for his advice, and how should I approach my issues or concerns . . . he is the first person I usually reach out to!

**Ty:** Recently, I was having some problems and had to go home… I didn't think it was a big deal…but my resident assistant in my dorm (RA) called every day…asking me was I okay…telling me, you have to come back to school…he talked with me and was very encouraging…he's been a really good dude... he checks on me every day he sees me…always saying, “hey, young fellow are you good…if you need anything, let me know… I'm here, we are here for you guys… I’m here to help you in any way possible". I appreciate that…they seem to care about me as a person…it has helped me realize…I don't have to always go home to talk to my parents about something…I have people here that are like family to me.

**Oscar:** If I encounter social problems, I mainly go to…my dad I also have a couple of friends on campus I can talk with…but my father and I are very close and I rely on him. When I have concerns regarding relationships, college, partying, organization or young ladies…he and I go back and forth sometimes (laughing) he would just help get through it…He always provides different ideas and solutions that I can use to get through
certain things… my dad helps me get through challenges…. Interviewer: was there anyone on campus who helped you fill in the gaps…if your father was unavailable? …social-wise, I would go to my diversity mentor on campus…he's great! We have been together since I was a Start Fast mentee…I also have a friend who is a part of my student organization… he’s our social relations chair…I go to them…they always provide positive and sound advice.

Carter: my uncle…he's not really my uncle, but he and my dad really close…he's like a godfather to me… when my dad’s not there, he stands in the gap…I really have a win-win situation when I'm having problems…I can talk to him about anything. He literally breaks it down from bottom all to the top…. he's always there to listen; he's a very good listener, and he's a very good under-stander. So are my dad and my mother. They're the same way. But sometimes, you know, us teenagers…we don't want to hear what our parents have to say… he has always taught me to be responsible…he's just always there supporting me and my brother in everything and anything that we do!

Jamal: My parents, I talk to them every day. I talk to my mother every day and my father every other day…they're always there…keeping me on track. They remind me of what they have been through…and what steps I can take to improve myself or situation they definitely helped me to stay grounded…they remind me that they want me to become my own person, however they will still tell me when I am wrong (laughing). I see them as my support group…to listen and suggest things in which I can consider as I move forward in life.
R3. Sub-question 2. Researcher’s Reflections

Mentorship comes in various forms of engagement, from parents (family), friends, faculty and staff. African American males face unique challenges that may inhibit their success in college; however, supportive relationships may facilitate and enhance their abilities to succeed (Palmer & Gasman 2008; Paul-Dixon, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). One of the successful methodologies considered for student achievement through mentorship could be the WISE method, where the mentor can view:

- **W - Whole person.** College students must be viewed as more than a GPA, a scholarship recipient, an athlete, or a deficit oriented statistic.

- **Promote I - Intrusive accountability.** Successful programs understand the non-negotiable necessity to build in an accountability system.

- **Engage in, S - Sustained,** systemic, support. No program or initiative, regardless of its level of importance or initial fanfare, is able to make a lasting impact into the lives of its participants without the sustained, sanctioned support of the organization’s leadership and

- **E - Exposure to success.** Insisting that students are exposed to an array of varied expressions of success is a component central to the best mentoring programs (Kelly & Christian, 2014).

3. **What social challenges have you overcome while attending York University or Chance University?**

**Calvin:** Many of the social challenges I face on campus revolve around the color of my skin. As a darker skinned male on campus, with dreads (dreadlocks) being socially acceptable here has been difficult. I think my presence on campus scares some of the folks who don’t look like me…at times this has made me question my love for-self…I want to be seen as a positive person on campus but the shade [disrespect] is real!!!! However, I connected with a black male support group on campus that helped me better understand my purpose in this space…they helped me better understand how to love me, they have been very supportive…the university needs more groups on campus that promote diversity!!

**Oliver:** I would like to see my school promote more opportunities for student interconnectivity…we need more programs that bring us together rather than divide us…I want to be involved in programs that empower all students on campus, so we learn how to face the social challenges within our lives…

**Carl:** Wow! The first thing I realized when I got here was some students are very privileged…they take for granted the small things in life and only focus on themselves. I believe that being on a predominately white campus as a black man is difficult… and that the university needs to spend more time educating and helping those who don’t look like me become socially aware to the needs of black and brown people on our campus…some people (white) are just so ignorant to the ways of others.

**Ty:** I have not had many social challenges to date. I have noticed, students and staff members are actually friendlier on campus than they were at my high school…my...
ability to communicate with others has improved since I arrived…my ability to talk with people has helped me overcome any challenges that I might face.

**Oscar:** being a man of color has always been a challenge in this environment. During my first semester, I quickly realized that I was the only person of color in many of my classes… Sometimes, I would get that look…you know…the one that make you feel uncomfortable, and why are you here…and that you're different from everybody else. So there's challenges of just being…in class…and having thought processes that are different from the majority of my peers…the challenge of being the minority in the classroom have been difficult … overcoming my concerns and staying focused in class has been a social adjustment.

**Carter:** My social concerns revolve around my inability to play football... I like the concept of team…it motivates me… my brother is on a full scholarship...watching and learning from him, has been very motivational and helpful… he has set a good example for me to follow… my brother has shown me how to interact with faculty, staff and students on campus…his mentorship has made me very socially aware on campus!

**Jamal:** The one social challenge that I have had trouble with was balancing friendships with academics. Being a student on such a large campus inspired me to become very active in numerous organizations and attend programs across campus. My involvement with these organization began to take away from time I should have spent on my academics pursuits. Overtime, I began to realize that the best way to balance the two was to cut back on the events and organizations I was a part of.
**R3. Sub-question 3. Researcher’s Reflections**

Internal and external challenges can be a deterrent to academic success. Calvin mentioned the color of his skin; Oscar noted the challenges of being a man of color in a predominantly White environment and culture. Jamal mentioned the balancing act he faced between friendships and academics. Calvin’s and Oscar’s perception of their own Blackness and their perceived notion that light-skinned African Americans are seen more favorably than dark-skinned African American initially hindered their ability to feel comfortable in their personal space (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 2013; Uzogara, Lee, Abdou, & Jackson, 2014). The tradeoff in balancing friendships, extracurricular activities and organizing one’s daily routine collegiately is an adjustment that each student must learn how to manage (Greene & Maggs, 2015; Harper & Newman, 2016). Time management and the academic demands placed upon students will quickly open their eyes to the reality of the day-to-day rigors of pursuing a bachelor degree (MacCann, Fogarty, & Roberts, 2012). A student’s ability to master this concept will further enhance his ability to grow academically!

4. **Tell me about your friendships and acquaintances that you have met on campus; how do you get along with them?**

**Calvin:** Many of my closet friends understand that I'm a very low maintenance type of person….but I'm always there if you need me…at times we have gone six months without speaking to one another…however, when we do connect we pick up right where we left off… my friends, know if they need anything I have their back… I have met several people on campus and now realize I am not good with faces and names…there
are people like my resident assistant (RA) who bumps in to me periodically…and I'm like what's your name?

I was dating a young lady and we started to hangout from time-to-time. She got involved in a sorority and pledged…this took up most of her time so I rarely saw her… I showed up at her probate (step) show after we had not seen each other in month’s…she did not realize I was there…when she saw me … she broke down and started crying…I just said to her that is what friends do…we have been kicking it ever since…social media allows me to stay connected to everyone I care for…I always want them to make sure that they understand that I’m always there for them…

**Oliver:** My friendships start at home my mom and dad are my two biggest cheerleaders…I have several friends I hang with on campus…we speak to one another but that’s about it…the majority of my friends are on the football team…we do what football teams do each week…regarding preparing for class, study halls, tutoring sessions and then game day…that takes most of my week!

**Carl:** many of my closet friends are from my hometown…when we came to campus we decided to move into to the dorms together… after our first year, we all moved into another apartment together… when we go home we all travel together…we celebrate our accomplishments together as well… as far as other students on campus, it's definitely a different type of relationship…it's different because the students on campus don't know me…and don't know my story prior to coming here…**Interviewer:** Tell me about your story? Cool, so growing up in Philadelphia…I used to engage in gang-related activities…. I was in multiple shoot-outs with my friends, but that's because…I didn’t conform to society; I wanted to be around the cool people… I was always
fighting…there were times when I had to run for my life…I have seen my friends get shot while we were running…there was times when people just walked up to my house and started shooting… I had shoot outs in front of my house! That's where I come from; my real friends… they understand my experience!

Ty: When I got here I spoke to people regularly… I developed a series of handshakes with several friends on campus over 20 to be exact…I have a different handshake for each person I know… we did this all within the first seven weeks of school… We also have nicknames for one another…we play video games on our downtime during the day!!! We just hang out…have lunch and dinner together…we play on the same flag football team…we're trying to recruit more people to come play with us… our bond has become stronger. Although we come from different backgrounds and places…we understand that we are here to accomplish one goal and that is to graduate and become successful in life.

We constantly keep tabs with one another… In the mornings when my roommate and I wake up to go to class…we encourage one another to do well and support each other; when one of us doesn’t feel like getting out of bed (mainly me at 7:00 am in the morning) I hear my roommates say “let go, it’s time to change the world” that motivates me!!!! This has created an awesome bond between us… I think we will remain friends long after we graduate!

Oscar: The majority of my friends are underclassmen, they are the cohort I entered college with. The remainder of the people I hang with are recipients of the same scholarship I was offered to attend our school. Most of the peers I have met are through our monthly meetings of students who received our grant, we hangout from time-to-time
and go to lunch or dinner occasionally. I also have several friends, which I have met through the social and academic organization I have been involved with since coming here… they are all pretty cool!!

**Carter:** I have a couple of friends I go to when I need help in class or in life. One of them attended the same high school that I went to…we hardly ever talked in high school but since we came here we kind of connected and become really close…having my brother here helps as well…we are always bouncing ideas off each other.

**Jamal:** being a part of a student organization during my freshman year was very helpful it allowed me to socialize with others…they allowed me to develop long and short term relationships. However, as I got older my circle of friends got smaller…I began to re-evaluate the individuals in which I wanted to invest most of my time with…I found the group of friends I hang out with now motivating…they keep me on my toes…if there's an assignment that I need to get done, they are supportive and ensure that I am working to get my work completed! I spend more time in the library, study groups or go to work with a tutor if needed…we spend time working and studying together and completing our assignments before we go out and partying (laughing)!!! My friend group definitely helps motivate me... we motivate each other… so we can have fun and stay focused at the same time!!!

**R3. Sub-question 4. Researcher’s Reflections**

The development of relationships in college can be the beginning of a lifelong commitment to stay engaged with one’s peers. The social capital invested and the supportive nature of a person’s affiliation with peers can be insightful, invigorating, thought-provoking and motivating (see Figure 4.3). Davis (1991) believed that the “social
bonds and supportive interactions are important to a person’s health and well-being” (p. 143). Researchers have found that support networks, which include family, peers, and mentors, facilitate adjustment to college (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004; Feenstra, Banyard, Rines, & Hopkins, 2001; Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton, & Wilson, 1999). Although each participant recognized a family or peer group as an avenue to stay engaged outside of the classroom, I wonder what type of life-long bonds are being developed through this interaction?

**Research question three**: What social challenges have African American males faced that has helped you persist at HBCUs or PWIs?

![Figure 4.3. Participant’s Non-Cognitive/Anti-Deficit Framework Coding](image)
ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

The subsequent figures represent the outcomes from an analysis of themes. The chapter also presents findings on the research questions—here, Saldana’s (2015) Streamline Coding and open coding were used to analyze the transcriptions of narratives for themes. Furthermore, the researcher utilized Sedlack’s (2004) Non-Cognitive Development Theory and Harper’s (2012) Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework to analyze each theme. My research was designed to arrive at a thorough understanding of each step through an analysis process rather than expecting a grand moment of discovery (Richards, 2009). My goal was to describe the inter-woven-ness (i.e., interrelatedness and integration) of each theory. Ford and Hjorth (2014) suggested that this interrelatedness is a form of code-weaving that integrates key code words and phrases into a narrative form to better understand how a puzzle fits together. Figures 4-1, 4-2 and 4-3 represent the researched theme in research questions one, two and three.

This section is designed not only to explain the codes but to objectively peer into each framework and analyze individual themes as they relate to the research question! Most importantly, the goal is to continue to provide insight into the lives of each participant, utilizing the prescribed research theories to better understand their personal perspective on each theory individually and collectively.

Increasing Persistence Factors

Habley, Bloom, and Robbins (2012) suggested that “a student who persists is one who continues to enroll at an institution” (p. 4). Merriam-Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (2002) suggested that a persister is a person who “goes on resolutely or stubbornly despite opposition, importunity, or warning: to continue firmly...
or obstinately.” Based upon the findings and utilizing Harper’s (2012) framework, the following family factors help African American males to persist:

1. How can family members *nurture and sustain* African American male student interest in school?
2. How do parents help shape African American males’ college *aspirations*?
3. What compels African American males to take advantage of *campus resources and engagement opportunities*?
4. How do African American males cultivate *value added relationships* with faculty and administrators? (See Figure 4.4.)

**Figure 4.4. Increasing Persistence Theme**

The four key terms for review are nurture and sustain, campus resources and engagement opportunities, aspirations and value-added relationships—each had a direct
impact on each participant’s ability to persist. The supportive nurturing and sustainability of each participant at their prospective institution began at home. The participant’s parents, family members and friends underpinned each student’s ability to persist at their respective university. Each mentioned some sort of help, motivation, and support both personally or financially that was provided to them that ensured their continued success! Harper (2012) noted that non-negotiable academic expectations should be placed upon an African American male at an early age to ensure African American males clearly understand that college is the most reliable pathway to success.

Each participant’s ability to understand the sacrifice needed to remain in school and their ability to persist despite their circumstances speaks to their personal aspirations and desire to be the best student possible. Their positive outlook regarding matriculation and the importance of their pending graduation was clear. Their individual but collective aspirations allowed each to better understand their life expectancy, and personal and professional achievements and identify their long-term goals as they travel to degree completion! Harper’s (2012) and Strayhorn’s (2008) work supports this positionality, noting that African American male achievers have an ability to grasp and understand their collegiate environment and lean how to navigate the university successfully!

The involvement in campus resources and student engagement opportunities had a direct impact upon each participant’s overarching view of his campus. Their involvement in student organizations, athletics, campus resources and counseling centers and non-academic student support groups were a needed respite from the day-to-day grind of their academic pursuits. All participants believed that these organizations influenced their ability to succeed on campus. According to Davis (1991), Foreman and Retallick (2012),
Harper and Newman (2016), Palmer and Strayhorn (2008), and Wood and Williams (2013) stated that active engagement in campus organizations, an entity or group on campus where students felt comfortable, accepted and engaged can greatly affect his personal and academic achievement. Harper and Quaye (2009) posited that “Students who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, are more likely than are their disengaged peers to persist through graduation” (p. 4).

The cornerstone of the matriculation process was the ability to develop meaningful relationships with peers, academic and non-academic support staff, faculty and administrators on campus. The cultivation of these relationships can add value to a student’s overall experience on a university campus (Brown, 2009; Harper, 2012; Warde, 2008). Each participant spoke of the need to foster mutual supportive relationships on their campus through engagement opportunities with peers and faculty/staff mentors. Scott (2012) identified four areas of influence for mentors who have a positive impact upon students:

- Acclimating students to the campus environment
- Informing students about campus involvement (clubs, organizations activities and professional development opportunities and internships) and
- Serving as a guide as students continue through college.

Finally, the importance of mentors on campus can serve to create a welcoming and reaffirming campus climate (Harper, 2012; Palmer, Wood, Dancy II & Strayhorn, 2014).
Non-Cognitive Skills

Numerous variables affect a student's decision to persist or leave college. Variables that affect persistence are generally categorized as cognitive (intellectual), non-cognitive (motivational) and environmental (Harper, 2012; Hyatt, 2003; Sedlacek, 2004). The focus of this section is on non-cognitive skill sets and how they are utilized to assist with student development and matriculation. Hyatt (2003) stated that “Non-cognitive variables are personal or social beliefs, motivations and attitudes of the individual student or members of the campus community that affect the student's decision to persist” (p. 3).

Participants communicated that student organizations (student activities and athletics), institutional student services (student and diversity centers) and peer-to-peer interaction (student groups) provided by their universities had a direct impact on their abilities to maintain a positive outlook regarding their educational pursuits. Their insight lends credence to two distinct areas of Sedlacek’s (2004) non-cognitive variable of development: (1) availability of a strong support person(s) and (2) leadership experience (see Figure 4.5).

Additionally, Sedlacek (2004) posited that “students who have done well in school tend to have a person of strong influence who confers advice, particularly in times of crisis” (p. 45). Constructive support comes in various forms, including family, friends, faculty/staff relationship-building and ongoing mentorship; having strong supportive groups or persons connect a student’s ability to maintain good grades, persistence and graduation of African American males (Gloria, Kurpius, Hamilton & Willson 1999;
Kelly & Christian, 2014; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2010; Sedlacek, 2004; Strayhorn, 2008).

Figure 4.5. Non-Cognitive Skills Theme

Education is a journey that is not taken alone—it is built upon the ability to foster positive relationships to achieve a scholastic goal. The supportive nature of education sheds a persistent light upon a student’s ability to achieve! Through supportive relationships, leadership opportunities and skills can be developed. Each participant is developing and demonstrating strong leadership skills through their involvement in civic organizations, ROTC, athletics, non-academic programming and student government. Each young man wished to succeed and spoke of and aspired to help others grow and learn. White and Sedlacek (1996) and Wright, Counsell, Goings, Freeman, and Peat
(2016) determined that leadership is associated with academic success for students in nonacademic support programs. The value of each student’s involvement in leadership activities on their campus increases their likelihood of persistence.

**Social Challenges**

Social isolation is an ever-present challenge that follows African American males on a college campus. The prevailing literature highlights the stereotypical challenges African American males must face, including but not limited to: micro-aggressions, White privilege, classroom diversity and instructor diversity (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002, 2007; Harper, 2009; Scott, 2012). The participants in this study identified social concerns, yet each displayed a determination to resist stereotypical norms (see Figure 4.6). Research question three, as illustrated, guides the discussion within this section and provides critical insight into the lives of each participant.

*Figure 4.6. Social Challenges Theme*
The participant’s combination of positive concepts of self, personal stick-to-
itiveness and overall awareness of their surroundings noticeably outlines how they traversed their individual and collective experiences within and outside of the classroom. This research revealed the interconnectedness between the two research theories (see Table 4.6). One area of discussion is “Handling the System” by Sedlacek (2004), which defines how students “exhibit a realistic view of the system on the basis of personal experience of racism” (p. 37), and Harper’s (2012) “Out of Class Engagement” opportunities, which addresses, “what compels African American males to take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities” (p. 5). Participants from York University spoke of the racial indifference they experienced at the time of their attendance, citing White privilege, a feeling of isolation (being uncomfortable in the predominate culture), along with peer and instructor disrespectfulness to their Blackness. However, each participant’s principal concern was the lack of African American male classroom instructors. This is a concerning providence—per the National Center for Statistics Education (2013), less than 6% of all professors at colleges and universities are African American males. The lack of identifiable role models and potential mentors for each participant was identified as needing improvement at their universities.

The African American males who were a part of this study were multitaskers and effectively efficient when it came to navigating the social and educational environment. Although personal growth is evident in each participant, their involvement in multiple organizations and programs on their perspective campuses had enhanced their abilities to persist. Their desire to engage others both interpersonally and institutionally spoke to their individual motivation to evolve beyond their current academic pursuit.
**Interconnectedness of Research Frameworks**

The conceptual frameworks of each concept are a model and structure for the observations of my research. These frameworks provide basic concepts and directs the importance of each question. Additionally, each has helped me become aware of their interconnections and better understand the significance of the data. There is a two-way relationship between non-cognitive variables and anti-deficit thinking frameworks which is identified in Table 4.6. The dynamic relationship between these two interacting research findings fits into the conceptual framework that provides an explanation of the phenomena and an interpretation of the results.

Kuh (2009) defined student engagement as time and effort devoted to activities linked to a desired outcome. Additionally, in Astin’s (1984) theory of involvement he emphasized the psychological and behavioral magnitude of students’ involvement on campus and highlighted the importance of their involvement regarding persistence and retention (Palmer, Wood, Dancy & Strayhorn, 2014). Sedlacek and Harper’s work have striking similarities. The participants in this study identified family involvement, out-of-class engagement opportunities and valued-added relationships as several experiences that enhanced their opportunities for success on their collegiate campuses. Each resembled Sedlacek’s positive self-concepts, whereas each participant demonstrated confidence, strength of character, determination and independence as well as Harper’s concept of fostering mutually supportive relationships by taking advantage of campus resources. I focused on strength of character as it relates to dignity, poise, restraint, self-discipline, stability and self-governance. Each participant seemed to exude a self-confidence about themselves that was refreshing. They expected to succeed
notwithstanding the challenges they faced! They would not adhere to the deficit-thinking mindset that society and others placed upon them. For each, their strength was imprinted upon them by family and extended family members; and the expectation of life-long success through educational enrichment. Once participants gained access to their perspective universities, peers, faculty and staff continued to reinforce their desire to persist!
Table 4.6

Commonalities of Research Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Cognitive Variable</th>
<th>Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive self-concept</td>
<td>Familial Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic self-appraisal</td>
<td>K-12 School Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully handling the system (racism)</td>
<td>Out-of-School College Prep Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance for long-term goals</td>
<td>Classroom Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of strong support person</td>
<td>Oct-of-Class Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>Enriching Educational Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>Graduate School Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge acquired in the field</td>
<td>Career Readiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Note. Adapted from Sedlacek’s Description on Non-Cognitive Variables and Harper’s Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to better understand and tell the stories of each participant’s experience during their matriculation at their particular university and further analyze the researched frameworks of non-cognitive factors and anti-deficit thinking that allowed each student to succeed at Chance and York Universities. The stories of seven African American male students were facilitated through interviews, observations and their retold stories about their collegiate experiences. Each story allowed for a thick description and relevant data collection. Within this chapter the reader will find a summary of the instructional, and participants findings. The findings, which were derived from the data analysis, provide a sound foundation on which to make summaries, conclusions and recommendations for immediate and future study, and on which to base final reflections.

Summary of Institutional Findings

1. How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

Maintaining student persistence on a college campus is an ongoing initiative to assist and create opportunities for personal, professional and academic success for African American males. Universities have instituted a myriad of programming opportunities and environmental endeavors to ensure student success. Currently, the HBCU and PWI within this study have developed first-year seminars, orientation programs, student diversity centers, ongoing tutorial and advisement services that target
African American males. I had the pleasure of speaking to several administrators from each institution as a part of my follow-up conversations, and each noted the information provided at new student orientation was critical to student success and persistence. These programs provide insight into the cultural expectations on each campus and help student become acclimated to their new educational environment (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens 2008; Siu-Man & Robinson, 1998).

2. How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

Improving non-cognitive skills are a social and cultural imperative for African American males. The goal of a university is not only to graduate each attending student but to provide the requisite skill-set needed for long-term success. Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, and Borghans (2014) postulated that “character is a skill, not a trait … character is shaped by families, schools, and social environments” (p. 1). Academic institutions assist in laying a foundation for cultural interaction, relationship development, and soft skill development, i.e., social graces, communication skills, problem-solving, critical observation, language skills, problem-solving, time management, teamwork and leadership skills (Beard, Schwieger, & Surendran, 2008; Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Nealy, 2011; Whiting, 2006). Finally, Gutman, and Schoon (2013) stated that, “non-cognitive skills are associated with positive outcomes for young people… factors such as self-control and school engagement are correlated with academic outcomes, financial stability in adulthood” (p. 2).

3. What social challenges have African American males encountered to help them persist at HBCUs or PWIs?
Helping students navigate the social landscape and new educational environment can be a daunting task for any university. The acclimation and enriching experiences student will undoubtedly share can have negative and positive outcomes for each student. Educators and administrators at each institution mentioned their hopes for each student. They want each student to feel as if, ‘their school could be their home away from home’, a place where each student could feel comfortable and grow. Each school in this study promoted a sense of belonging (Quaye & Harper, 2014; Stephens, Brannon, Markus, & Nelson, 2015). Although racial engagement at the HBCU differed from the PWI, the students at the PWI recognized their university’s attempt to make their environment a better place to live in; however, the participants in this study believed each university respected their individual beliefs and personal ambitions. Research suggests the more socially engaged students are on their campuses, the more likely they are to persist (Khine & Areepattamannil, 2016; Perna, 2015; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Scott, 2012).

Striking the proper balance between educational and non-educational pursuits is a significant component in academic and (social) time management and engagement.

**Summary of Participant Findings**

1. How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

   The involvement in non-academic programming was a key element to each participant’s ability to persist. Each participant within this study were involved in non-academic campus organization i.e. athletics, student government, diversity groups, or college/major related support groups. Participants noted their involvement in these organizations enhanced their abilities to stay continually enrolled. Karp and Stacey (2013) suggested that four non-academic support mechanisms promote student success: (1) creating social relationships, (2) clarifying
aspirations and enhancing commitment, (3) developing college know how, and (4) making college life feasible. Each of these mechanisms are based upon student support services that each college offers. These services help students gain clarity about their interactions with peers and advisors, access to college services and understanding how to overcome obstacles and better plan their academic and career goals (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Karp & Stacey, 2013).

2. How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

Although participation in social and on campus organizations play a significant role in non-academic and the educational maturation of each participant, their core strength came from their parents and family members. Each participant realized and recognized the influence their family members had on their preparation and decision to attend college, and the financial and personal support provided to them my family members. “Families provide the environment in which work roles, values, expectations, and aspirations are transmitted to and formed by the child” (Metheny & McWhirther, 2013, p 378). Although the educational background of each parent or family member differed from one another, participants spoke of their ongoing discussions with their parents about the need to pursue (bachelor & advanced) degrees beyond high school. These parent/child/student conversations catalogue the nurturing atmosphere in which each participant was reared. By examining these relationships, we can further study “how family and parents matter in the quest to determine predictors of increased African American male achievement” (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy (2013, p. 75).
3. What social challenges have African American males encountered to help them persist at HBCUs or PWIs?

Many of the social challenges faced by each participant mirror one another. The need for financial resources, access to campus administrators and the balancing of friendships (dating) and academics are an ongoing internal struggle that each face and must conquer to ensure persistence. The elephant in the room of which each participant was aware was his Blackness on his campus and how others perceived them. Their desire to be socially accepted was realized throughout each narrative and guided much of the discussion when it came to race matters and microaggressions on campus. One of the most intriguing identifiers within the research was the need for each university to employ additional Black male professors. Participants identified the lack of Black male instructors in the classroom. They yearned for Black male role models with whom to engage and have intellectual classroom discussions, not only for themselves but for non-Black classmates as well. Research notes the ongoing dilemma of retaining and recruiting African America male collegiate classroom instructors (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2013; Warren, 2013). Participants were looking for a variance in thought and ideas based upon an educational experience and from a Black perspective. Each believed the social interconnectivity derived from having Black males in the classroom would improve their engagement opportunities for successful integration into their campus experience.

**Conclusion**

What I have come to acknowledge about each participant was how they carried themselves. Each participant’s resilience, positive attitudes and willingness to work hard
and reach for their personal and professional goals were invigorating! Second, each had a clear understanding of what they wanted for themselves and their families. Third, each participant was determined and had a sense of direction. The question that intrigued me was: how can you measure something so intangible? Was it their family environment, social interconnectivity, peer or faculty/staff mentorship engagement opportunities, or the student organizations with which they were involved?

Although each participant noted some form of setback in their young personal and academic careers, all displayed a level of perseverance that is needed to complete their most important task before them—graduation! They expected to finish what they started. Each participant displayed a quiet passion and burning desire to prove not only to themselves but to those around them that they could achieve and handle any barrier placed before them. Although the academic talents of each young man varied in degree and attainment, each participant wanted more for themselves and were involved in off-campus and on-campus organizations that enhanced their personal and professional growth potential. They all expected to purse a post-bachelor education; several wanted to pursue a Ph.D. or MBA or open their own businesses and become a member of congress.

Their pursuits led me to believe that persistence is not just a word—it’s a commitment, attitude and character trait, it is a belief and expectation of one’s self to reach and attain a goal. What I enjoyed most about these young men was their uncompromising willingness to ensure that success is attained at all cost! They are becoming what Dr. Howard Thurman described as the irreducible essence of their uncompromising selves, using persistence to demonstrate effort, while effort should be
measured twice when it comes to evaluating academic success and persistence (Duckworth, 2016)!

I noted within each young man an awareness of their surroundings and personal perspective and understanding of their environment. Tracey and Sedlacek (1984) pointed to a realistic self-appraisal as a means to better understand how students may perform academically. Each young man exhibited this acumen. Participants cited their interconnectedness with the university structure; peers, faculty and staff members and how each relationship allowed them to perform at optimal levels. Harper (2013) posited that African American males are “outnumbered at most colleges and universities, their grade point averages are among the lowest of all undergraduate students, their engagement in classrooms and enriching out-of-class experiences is alarmingly low, and their attrition rates are comparatively higher than those of White students in U.S. higher education” (p. 3). Although this statement may have validity, what I encountered during my research was clearly at the opposite end of the spectrum for African American males. The narratives identified in this research were laden with success stories and positive outcomes. These encouraging outcomes are based upon each young man’s abilities to believe in themselves. Their determination and preparedness to matriculate was seared into them by their parents, nurtured through constant yet positive appraisal by family and friends and underpinned by their university’s personal, professional and academic expectations regarding achievement. Although they may face racism, racial stereotypes, microaggressions, and low expectations, they pressed on. I connect these statements with Dubois (1998), who stated “we have climbed to new heights where we would open at least the outer courts of knowledge to all, display it treasures to many,
and select the few to who its mystery of Truth is revealed’ (p. 124). These young men are a part of that dream of the selected few, whereas the door is open and they have demonstrated their willingness to climb to new heights!

**Recommendations for Immediate Action**

The findings from this study have led to the following recommendation to enhance African American males’ collegiate experience in order to improve African American males’ persistence in college.

- Remove financial obstacles to college entry. Harper (2012) stated that “Financial aid officers should help students find alternatives to loans and off-campus work” (p. 21). The ability for a university to assist students find internal and external scholarships based upon need level can greatly help families offset the cost of education.

- Continued Black Male Initiatives (BMIs) are needed on college campuses. BMIs provide a safe space for African American males to discuss a broad range of social, interpersonal, racial identity matters, Black male masculinity concerns and academic experiences.

- Develop articulation agreements with local K–12 institutions to encourage campus visits, class offerings and online learning opportunities, whereas the university can identify future students for matriculation to their campus.

- University-led mentorship programs should be established early in the academic process for African American males. First-year programs led by faculty and staff
members with assistance from upperclassmen to assist African American males will enable meaningful relationships with university stakeholders.

- Design ongoing engagement opportunities to build relationships with community and civic organizations, i.e., churches, local chapters of 100 Blackmen, Urban League, NAACP and African American male Greek Letter Fraternities.

- Develop mentorship programming with local proprietors and workforce leaders to enable job shadowing, internships and professional development to support student career readiness.

- Utilize this narrative for ongoing professional development in conversations with faculty, staff and administrators in order to better understand the personal and educational needs of African American males.

- Although the specter of race and microaggressions was not an underlying factor within this study, it was ever-present in my conversations with each participant. Each believed their respective university could do a better job breaking down cultural barriers that they faced. Harper (2012) stated that “Racism and racial stereotypes pose serious threats to one’s sense of belonging, engagement, academic achievement, and persistence” (p. 22).

- Employ and develop additional African American male classroom instructors and professors for entry into the collegiate pipeline.

Advancing each educator’s goal of assisting and advancing his or her student educationally and professionally so they may enter the workforce and graduate prepared
for success is important! This narrative may stimulate interest in and conversations between faculty and staff to formulate productive pathways that meets the needs of African American males.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

Although this study advances the constructs of non-cognitive variables and anti-deficit thinking frameworks, additional research should be considered for future study on persistence factors for African American males.

- Bean and Metzner’s (1975) description of persistence variables mentioned in Chapter 2 should also be considered for future study. They noted: (1) student background, (2) academic preparedness, (3) environmental, (4) psychological, (5) institutional, and (6) social integration variables as a means to better understand persistence. Although Bean and Metzner’s work was initially applied to nontraditional undergraduate students, this conceptual model could be used to advance future studies of African American males.

- This study identified participants from a public Historically Black College and University and a Public Research University. The research could be replicated at Highly Selective Private Universities such as Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Yale or Stanford and Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities such as Fisk, Hampton, Howard, Morehouse or Tuskegee to measure students’ non-cognitive and anti-deficit thinking frameworks outcomes.
• A quantitative research survey could be designed and introduced at each institution attended by participants or at the abovementioned schools, utilizing the attached developed survey (see Appendix J).

• A longitudinal study could be completed to better understand educational impact on career readiness and its long-term effects on each participant’s future educational and professional endeavors.

• Finally, a study that measures grit could be produced. Scholars have suggested the importance of grit for outcomes such as educational achievement (Strayhorn, 2014). Grit research has focused in three areas: (a) initial development of a grit scale, (b) theoretical mining of the concept to clarify its meaning and distinction from other personality traits, and (c) tests of its predictive validity for specific samples (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Strayhorn, 2014) (see Appendix F). However, Strayhorn indicated that tests have not been completed to test its validity for Black males as a predictor of academic student success.

The suggested recommendations are practical and representative. The implementation of these recommendations within each institution can be realized and adhered to if each university is committed to ensuring academic success as African American male’s matriculate at their respective universities. These recommendations align with Sedlacek’s (2004) non-cognitive and Harper’s (2012) anti deficit-thinking frameworks regarding student success models and family, peer-to-peer and faculty/staff interactions required to bolster each participant’s long-term educational and career goals.
As a final point, I intend to disseminate an executive summary of my research and findings to each university and submit a research proposal to the following organizations: the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and Association of Career and Technical education (ACTE).

**Final Reflections**

Several years ago, I had the pleasure of meeting one of my boyhood idols, a former Olympian (wrestling). He and I talked briefly about athletic performance and intensity; he believed that intensity could be taught and was immeasurable in each athlete he encountered. I mention this encounter because I noticed within each participant a quiet intensity and passion and how each young man viewed his opportunities at his respective university. As for intensity, I interpret it as a means of personal concentration—each participant was focused on their personal objective, whether it be academic or non-academic, matriculating to graduate school, starting their own business or just completing their bachelor degrees and moving into the workforce. Participants displayed an inner strength that could not be measured by a mere test or conversation, but by their abilities to persevere. The goals that they set for themselves are clearly within their grasp. Although their personal and economic backgrounds vary, these challenges would not hinder their individual and collective abilities to matriculate.

An additional challenge that went undiscussed was the need for each participant to seek mentorship from others outside of their ethnic group. This holistic view of their academic and personal environment could have a profound effect on each participant’s opportunity to grow both personally and intellectually. Research indicates that those students who step beyond their narrowing scope of social construction can find
illumination through experiences and engaging potential mentors who come from differing ethnic backgrounds (Brown Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Carraway, 2008; Ford, Scott, Goings, Wingfield, & Henfield, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to utilize qualitative research methodologies, specifically narrative inquiry, to explore, with a critical lens, the stories of African American males’ experiences as they persist collegiately. Specifically, the research sought to examine and comprehend how non-cognitive variables and an anti-deficit thinking model could intersect based upon the review of the narrative from each African American male. By reviewing the literature and then examining the background of each young man, we identified and examined the distinctive challenges each face educationally as well as dispelled the deficit-thinking research designed by previous investigators. Additionally, my goal was to illuminate both the existing state of the literature and provide direction for future inquiry, practice and policy that could result in better outcomes for African American males as they cross the educational finish line!
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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Participants

R1. How do Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions increase the persistence of African American males?

1. How have family members helped you during your attendance at York University or Chance University?
2. Explain why you decide to attend York University or Chance University?
   a. Follow up: How do you feel about your decision currently?
3. Explain how important is it for you to graduate from York University or Chance University?
   a. Follow Up: Have you ever dropped out of college altogether? If so why?
4. In what ways have you taken advantage of the campus resources and engagement opportunities York University or Chance University has to offer i.e.… nonacademic support groups or organizations (Athletics, Student Support Groups, fraternities, honor societies etc.…?
5. What are things about York University or Chance University help you stay continually enrolled?

R. 2. How do non-cognitive skills affect African American males’ persistence rates within HBCUs and PWIs?

1. What social or organizational experiences have improved your preparation to attend York University or Chance University?
2. Which non-academic campus services/resources have you taken advantage of at York University or Chance University?
3. Tell me about your experiences and motivating factors that have influenced you to continue to matriculate at York University or Chance University?

4. Tell me about your social life and experiences i.e. dating, social clubs/organization parting that you are/were involved in…

**R.3. What social challenges have African American males encountered to help them persist at HBCUs or PWIs?**

1. In your opinion how can York University or Chance University influence and improve student concerns and social conditions on your campus?

2. When you encounter social of non-academic problems and or challenges, do you have someone who will listen to you and help? Describe who that person might be?

3. What social challenges have you overcome while attending York University or Chance University?

4. Tell me about your friendships and acquaintances that you have met on campus, how do you get along with them?

**Wrap Up Questions**

1. What suggestions do you have for York University or Chance University administrators, faculty and staff that could improve African American male persistence/retention on your campus?

2. Are there any questions that I did not ask that you might have anticipated me to asking?

3. Do you have any additional comments that you would like add before we conclude this interview?
APPENDIX B

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research on Using Narrative Inquiry to Investigate Persistence Challenges for African American Males in Education: A Non-Cognitive Development/Anti Deficit Achievement Framework Approach. This is a research project being conducted by Michael Wood, PhD candidate in Workforce Education and Development, a student at The Pennsylvania State University. It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the study at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

BENEFITS
You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about specific barriers encountered by African American males, and which challenges that affects this population, ranging from educational persistence and preparation, and economic and workplace inequalities, to racial inequities.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your study answers will be stored in a password protected electronic format and in a locked secured office. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

[As a participants you will asked to participate in a follow-up interview and to provide contact information. In such a case you can add the following sentences:

At the end of the study you will be asked if you are interested in participating in an additional interview [in person]. Your name or identifying information will not be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this study will remain confidential.]
Consent Form Cont.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact my research supervisor, Professor Emeritus Edgar I. Farmer via phone at [814.867.2924] or via email at [eif1@psu.edu].

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that your rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this project, or you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, you may contact the York University Institutional Review Board at The 330 Building, Suite 205, University Park, PA 16802 Phone: 814-865-1775 • Fax: 814-863-8699 • ORProtections@psu.edu or Chance University Office of Sponsored Programs 700 Park Avenue, Suite 601 Marie V. McDemmond Center for Applied Research (MCAR) Norfolk, VA 23504 Office: 757-823-2113 Fax: 757-823-2823 Attention: Dr. Rownea Wilson 757-823-8668 rgwilson@nsu.edu

ELECTRONIC/Written CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

Participants Signature______________________________________________________ Date

Investigators Signature______________________________________________________ Date
Dear Participant:

I am writing on behalf of my ongoing research and request your assistance with an important project. As part of a larger program to evaluate the quality of education and your persistence at your university, we are conducting interviews of African American (Black) male students throughout several Mid-Atlantic colleges and universities.

The purpose of this study is to understand the specific persistence barriers encountered by African American males.

As a token of our appreciation for your participation in this important study, I will provide you with a Twenty Five Dollar ($25.00) gift certificate upon completion of the follow-up interview.

Your answers will be completely confidential. Additionally, the results of the research will be reported in a summary format, so again no one will link you to your responses. My desire is to schedule interviews the week of February 29, 2016.

This purposeful sample of participants should be:

- African American Male (Black)
- Between 18-22 years of age
- Sophomore., Junior or Senior, who
- Attended a Predominately White High School

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important project. If you have any questions about the administration of the research, please contact and respond to:

Michael Wood, The Pennsylvania State University 220 Grange Building University Park, Pa 16801 Phone: 814 865 1773, Fax: 814 863 0704 or mcw220@psu.edu or Dr. Carray Banks, Robinson Technology Center (RTC) Suite 420 Phone: 757 823 8712 Fax: 757 823 8215 or cbanks@nsu.edu

Sincerely,

Michael C. Wood

Michael C. Wood
Workforce Education and Development
The Pennsylvania State University
220 Grange Building University Park, PA 16802 Phone: 814.865.1773
APPENDIX D
Demographic Questionnaire

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Preferred Pseudonym: ____________________________________

2. Email Address: ___________________________________________

3. Phone Number: ___________________________________________

FAMILY PERSONAL BACKGROUND

4. What is your Age: __________________

5. How would you describe your family’s economic background?
   a. Low-income
   b. Lower Middle Class
   c. Middle Class
   d. Upper Middle Class
   e. Upper class

6. What is the highest level of education completed by your parents(s) or guardian(s), (please circle)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother or Guardian 1</th>
<th>Father or Guardian 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>Some High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or G.E.D.</td>
<td>High School Diploma or G.E.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Graduate School</td>
<td>Some Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Degree (Ph.D., E.D., MBA, JD etc.)</td>
<td>Terminal Degree (Ph.D., E.D., MBA, JD etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What is the highest level of education completed by your brother(s) or sister(s) (please circle)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brother(s)</th>
<th>Sister(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>Some High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma or G.E.D.</td>
<td>High School Diploma or G.E.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Graduate School</td>
<td>Some Graduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Degree (Ph.D., E.D., MBA, JD etc.)</td>
<td>Terminal Degree (Ph.D., E.D., MBA, JD etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. What is your best estimate of your household’s total income (please circle)?
   a. Under $20,000
   b. $20,001 - $40,000
   c. $40,001 - $60,000
   d. $60,001 - $80,000
   e. $80,001 - $100,000
   f. Over 100,001

9. What is your Mother/Guardian occupation (e.g. professor, teacher, sales associate or other)? (Please leave blank if not applicable)-

________________________________________________________________________

10. What is your Father/Guardian occupation (e.g. professor, teacher, sales associate or other)? (Please leave blank if not applicable)-

________________________________________________________________________
ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

11. What is your current academic year standing (please circle)?
   a. Sophomore
   b. Junior
   c. Senior

12. What is your major? ______________________________________

13. What is your current cumulative GPA? __________________________

14. What are your career goals?

FRIENDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

15. Please list the names and race/ethnicity of 5 of your closest friends?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Are you a member of a social organization, if so please identify or list by name?
   a. __________________________________
   b. __________________________________
   c. __________________________________
   d. __________________________________

17. Do you work after school, what business and how many hours do you work per week?
   a. Yes or No: ____________________________
b. On-campus or Off-campus: __________________________(specify business or industry name off campus)

c. Number of hours working after school per week:

__________________________

d. How many hours per day do you study after class? ____________
APPENDIX E

Consent Form for Online Survey

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on Using Narrative Inquiry to Investigate the Persistence Challenges for African American Males in Education. This is a research project being conducted by Michael Wood, PhD candidate in Workforce Education and Development, a student at The Pennsylvania State University. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

BENEFITS
You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about, specific barriers encountered by African American and which challenges that affects this population, ranging from educational persistence and preparation, and economic and workplace inequalities, to racial inequities.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your survey answers will be sent to a link at SurveyMonkey.com where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

Your name or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

CONTACT
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact my research supervisor, Professor Edgar Farmer via phone at [814.574.0541] or via email at [eif1@psu.edu].

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that your rights as a participant in research have not been honored during the course of this project, or you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to
someone other than the investigator, you may contact the York University Institutional Review Board at The 330 Building, Suite 205, University Park, PA 16802 Phone: 814-865-1775 • Fax: 814-863-8699 • ORProtections@psu.edu or Office of Sponsored Programs Marie V. McDemmond Center for Applied Research Suite 601 700 Park Ave, Norfolk, Virginia 23504-8060 Phone: 757.823.9053 • Fax: 757.823.2823 • www.nsu.edu/sgsr/sponsored-programs

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree
### APPENDIX F

#### Grit Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all like me</th>
<th>Not much like me</th>
<th>Somewhat like me</th>
<th>Mostly like me</th>
<th>Very much like me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setbacks don’t discourage me. I don’t give up easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a hard worker.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I finish whatever I begin.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interests change from year to year.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am diligent. I never give up.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Sedlacek Approval

From: William E. Sedlacek [mailto:wsed@umd.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 7, 2016 5:55 PM
To: Wood, Michael <mcw220@psu.edu>
Subject: RE: Survey Use

Michael- You have my permission to use the items as you wish- Also, please check with my website on references that may be of interest- Please let me know if you have more questions and let me know what you find- Good luck on your study- Bill

William E. Sedlacek
Professor Emeritus
College of Education
University of Maryland
P.O. Box 539
Great Cacapon, WV 25422-0539
Website http://williamsedlacek.info
Thought for today http://www.williamsedlacek.info/SedCal/
Latest book "Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education"

From: Michael C. Wood [mcw220@psu.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 07, 2016 4:57 PM
To: William E. Sedlacek
Subject: Survey Use

Dr. Sedlacek,

Good Afternoon. My name is Michael Wood. I am a PhD candidate at Penn State University, University Park. I am studying the subject: Using Narrative Inquiry to Investigate the Challenges to Retain African American males in Education a Non-Cognitive Development/Anti Deficit Achievement Framework Approach
I would like to use several questions from the survey you developed in your book "Beyond the Big Test". Questions will be asked (narratively) to better understand why African American males persist and succeed collegiately.

Thank you for your attention!
Happy New Year and thank you in advance!

Mike
--
Michael C. Wood
Counselor, Multicultural Resource Center
Co-Facilitator Black Male & Latino Empowerment Groups
PhD Candidate Workforce Education and Development
Asa. G. Hilliard III & Barbara A. Sizemore, Research Fellow
The Pennsylvania State University
220 Grange Building
University Park, PA 16802
Phone: 814.865.1773
APPENDIX H

Saldana’s Streamline Code to Theory Model Qualitative Inquiry
# APPENDIX I

Non Cognitive Quantitative Research Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Please answer the following questions?</td>
<td>- Pseudonyms Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Email Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Phone Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)</td>
<td>- American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Black or African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hispanic or Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- White / Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mixed Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is your age?</td>
<td>- 17 to 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 20 to 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 23-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 26 and Above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What type of educational institution do you attend?</td>
<td>- Historically Black College and University (HBCU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Public White Institution (PWI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Private Institution (PI)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What is your current academic year standing?
   ( ) Freshman
   ( ) Sophomore
   ( ) Junior
   ( ) Senior

6. What is your current cumulative GPA?
   ( ) Below 1.99
   ( ) 2.0 to 2.49
   ( ) 2.50 to 2.75
   ( ) 2.76 to 3.0
   ( ) 3.1 to 3.5
   ( ) 3.51 to 4.0
   ( ) 4.0 and above

7. What is your major or college?
   ( ) Science
   ( ) Technology (Industrial)
   ( ) Engineering
   ( ) Math
   ( ) Education
   ( ) Liberal Arts
   ( ) Social Work
   ( ) Business
   ( ) Computer Technology
   ( ) Nursing
   ( ) Health and Human Development
   ( ) Communications
   ( ) Arts and Architecture
   ( ) Other
* 8. How much education do you expect to complete during your lifetime?
   ( ) Associates Degree
   ( ) B.A. or B.S.
   ( ) Master Degree or (MBA)
   ( ) Doctoral Degree i.e.: J.D, M.D, PhD.
   ( ) Other Professional Certificates

9. Please indicate the five highest motivating factors for the completion of your degree? (List Five)
   ( ) The ability to set an example for others
   ( ) Family
   ( ) Plan for additional College (Graduate School or Professional School)
   ( ) Improve GPA
   ( ) Improve future earnings
   ( ) Improve career goals
   ( ) Personal satisfaction and accomplishment
   ( ) Create opportunities for more hobbies and leisure activities
   ( ) Better consumer decision making
   ( ) Improved quality of life for offspring
   ( ) Improved health and life expectancy
   ( ) Increased personal and professional mobility
   ( ) Improved work conditions
   ( ) Higher savings levels
   ( ) Other

* 10. Do you work during the academic year?
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No
   ( ) N/A
* 11. How many hours each week do you work?

- [ ] N/A
- [ ] 1-10 hrs per week
- [ ] 11-15 hrs per week
- [ ] 16-20 hrs per week
- [ ] 21 to 25 hrs per week
- [ ] 26 hrs per week and above
- [ ] N/A

* 12. Please indicate any campus specific spaces or locations on campus you like to go to and hangout with your friends? (Click All that Apply).

- [ ] Student Center
- [ ] Library
- [ ] Dormitories
- [ ] Gym
- [ ] Athletics Events
- [ ] Recreation Centers
- [ ] Campus Common Areas
- [ ] Off Campus Activities i.e., Religious, Political, or Social Organizations

* 13. Are you a member or participate in any social organizations? Click All that Apply.

- [ ] Fraternity
- [ ] Student Clubs Organization
- [ ] Honor Societies
- [ ] Non Profit Organizations
- [ ] Student Political Organizations
- [ ] Religious Organizations
- [ ] Other
14. How would you describe your family income?

- Low-income
- Lower Middle Class
- Middle Class
- Upper Middle Class
- Upper Class

* 15. What is your approximate annual household income?

- $0-$24,999
- $25,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$99,999
- $100,000-$124,999
- $125,000-$149,999
- $150,000-$174,999
- $175,000-$199,999
- $200,000 and up

* 16. What is the highest level of school your mother completed or the highest degree she received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree
17. What is the highest level of school your father completed or the highest degree he received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some post secondary education but no degree
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree

18. What is your Mother/Guardian current occupation?

- Manager
- Education
- Business Associate
- IT Manager
- Military Member/Retired
- Medical Industry
- Doctor (Medical)
- Consultant
- Human Resources
- Sales Associate
- Factory Worker
- Domestic
- Mechanic
- Airline Industry
- Rail Industry
- Shipping Industry (Maritime)
- Technology Industry
- Retired
- Other
* 19. What is your Father/Guardian current occupation?

☐ Manager
☐ Education
☐ Business Associates
☐ IT Manager
☐ Military Member/Retired
☐ Medical Industry
☐ Doctor (Medical)
☐ Consultant
☐ Human Resources
☐ Sales Associate
☐ Factory Worker
☐ Domestic
☐ Mechanic
☐ Airline Industry
☐ Rail Industry
☐ Shipping Industry (Maritime)
☐ Technology Industry
☐ Retired
☐ Other

* 20. What is the highest level of education completed by your brother(s)?

☐ Some High School
☐ High School Diploma or G.E.D.
☐ Some post secondary education but no degree
☐ Some College
☐ Associates Degree
☐ Bachelor Degree
☐ Some Graduate School
☐ Terminal Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., MBA, JD etc.)
☐ Unsure
21. What is the highest level of education completed by your sister?

- Some High School
- High School Diploma or G.E.D
- Some post secondary education but no degree
- Some College
- Associates Degree
- Bachelor Degree
- Some Graduate School
- Terminal Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., MBA, JD etc.)
- Unsure

22. About 50% of university students typically leave before receiving a degree. If this should happen to you, what would be the most likely cause?

- I am absolutely certain that I will obtain a degree
- Accept a good job
- Enter military service
- It would cost more than my family could afford
- Marriage
- Currently disinterested in study
- Insufficient reading or study skills
- Other

23. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the below items. Please respond to the statements below with your feelings at present or with your expectations of how things will be. Circle in your answer to the right of each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It should not be very hard to get a B (3.0) average at my university?</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>I get easily discouraged when I try to do something and it <strong>doesn't</strong> work.</td>
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<td>I am sometimes looked up to by others.</td>
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<td>If I run into problems concerning school, I have someone who would listen and help me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is no use in doing things for people, you only find that you are not appreciated in the long run.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In groups where I am comfortable, I am often looked up to as leader.</td>
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<td>I expect to have a harder time academically than most students at my university, college, etc.</td>
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<td>Once I start something, I finish it.</td>
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<td>I am as skilled academically as the average applicant at my university, college, etc.</td>
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<td>I expect I will encounter racism at university, college, etc.</td>
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<td>People can pretty easily change me even though I thought my mind was already made up on the subject.</td>
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<td>My friends and relatives <strong>don't</strong> feel I should go to college.</td>
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<td>If course tutoring is made available on campus at no cost, I would attend regularly.</td>
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<td>I want a chance to prove myself academically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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My high school grades don't really reflect what I can do.
PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Throughout my career, I have been highly dedicated to the learning, training and advancement of others. In each held position, I have found ways to incorporate professional, adult learning and education into the workplace. I have multiple years of experience developing programs to assess professional, educational and workforce capabilities through the development of individualized programs to enhance employee skills. My goal as an administrator/educator is to create a comfortable and interactive learning environment based on respect rather than fear of the subject matter.

EDUCATION

- **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) May 2017**
  Post-Secondary Leadership Workforce Education and Development, Department of Learning and Performance Systems, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa

- **Masters of Arts in Education (MA. ED.) June 2010**
  Administration and Supervision, University of Phoenix

- **Bachelors of Science (B.S.) May 2001**
  Technology Education Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Va.

CAREER EXPERIENCE

2012 – Present
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa
Counselor, Multicultural Resource Center

2011 – 2012
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa
Teachers Assistant PDCC

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION AT REFEREED CONFERENCES

Wood, M. (2015, October) *Using an Embedded Case Study Analysis to Investigate the Challenges to Retain African American and Latino Males in Education.* Presentation at the Black Doctoral Network Conference, Atlanta, Ga


PUBLICATIONS
Journal Articles, Peer Reviewed