The Persistence of Black Male Community College Students and the Impact of Preconceived Attitudes and Behaviors of Faculty

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The Persistence of Black Male Community College Students and the Impact of Preconceived Attitudes and Behaviors of Faculty

Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative study, using a phenomenological design, was three-fold. First, it explored the lived experiences of Black male community college students enrolled at State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges in Central and Western New York, as they exposed insight into strategies employed as they persisted to graduation. Next, it explored preconceived notions held by faculty about the academic capabilities of these students. Finally, it explored ways to end preconceived notions held by faculty directed at these students. Data was collected using an anonymous questionnaire distributed to targeted faculty within identified geographic areas and one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with students. Findings uncovered positions held by each group on historical hindrances to Black male students achieving academic success.

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Ellen T. Wayne

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The Persistence of Black Male Community College Students and the Impact of Preconceived Attitudes and Behaviors of Faculty

By

Joshua A. Martin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Linda Hickmon Evans, Ph.D.

Committee Member
Ellen T. Wayne, Ed.D.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

August 2017
Dedication

I stand in awed awareness of God’s presence and assistance in negotiating the doctoral process; as such, I render thanksgiving and immense gratitude.

To my family, thank you. My parents; Carolyn and A. B. Martin, Jr., you exhibit a standard where mediocrity is not acceptable. Your unconditional love and support keep me afloat. To the world’s greatest grandmother, Mrs. Helen Pernell; and my Aunt Sarah Smith, thank you for supporting me in every way possible. Both of you are the epitome of a servant leader, and I only hope to emulate your model. To my siblings and extended family, which include: the Elmwood/Clary/Corcoran/Buffalo State clans; Deacons Hudson and Bellgrove; my colleagues; and mentors, thanks for your patience and support. To those who have transitioned from this life (Demond, Jordan, Aunt Sug, Dr. Tanyhill and Grand-dad Calvin Pernell); you are with me always.

To Cohort 3 (The Extraordinary Eighteen), thank you for embracing me. We laughed, learned, and grew together. I am better because of you and I look forward to the ways in which the world will be changed because of your aspirations and commitment.

To the faculty of St. John Fisher College (Syracuse), I appreciate you. Dr. Theresa Pulos, Dr. Kim VanDerLinden, Dr. James Evans, Dr. Jason Berman, and Dr. C. Michael Robinson, you each contributed to and impacted my journey in immeasurable ways. My Committee Members, Dr. Ellen T. Wayne, thank you for providing a perspective that challenged me to do better. I appreciate you. Finally, to Dr. Linda
Hickmon Evans, my Dissertation Chair. You were committed to my growth and pushed me to be better. May God continue to bestow His amazing grace on you!

Last, but certainly not least, Ms. Jeriesha R. Johnson, thank you very much, Cutie Pie! You are appreciated for being supportive and caring. You are an awesome woman, I love you.
Biographical Sketch

A lifelong resident of Syracuse, NY, Joshua A. Martin is a product of the Syracuse City School District. Despite having been raised in an economically disadvantaged community, plagued with violence, he experienced firsthand the benefits of education and its power to elevate above mean circumstances. Today, he serves as an ally, advocate, and resource for positive change.

Mr. Martin currently coordinates programs for high school students in Central New York as the Early College High School Coordinator at Onondaga Community College. Mr. Martin attended Onondaga Community College from 2001 to 2004 and graduated with an Associate of Applied Science degree in 2004. He attended Buffalo State College, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 2006, and a Master of Science degree in Adult Education in 2010. He also attended Stonybrook University, earning a Master of Arts degree in Higher Education Administration in 2015. He came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2015 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Martin pursued his research in the persistence of Black male community college students and the impact of preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty under the direction of Dr. Linda Hickmon Evans and Dr. Ellen T. Wayne and received the Ed.D. Degree in August 2017.
Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study, using a phenomenological design, was three-fold. First, it explored the lived experiences of Black male community college students enrolled at State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges in Central and Western New York, as they exposed insight into strategies employed as they persisted to graduation. Next, it explored preconceived notions held by faculty about the academic capabilities of these students. Finally, it explored ways to end preconceived notions held by faculty directed at these students.

Data was collected using an anonymous questionnaire distributed to targeted faculty within identified geographic areas and one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with students. Findings uncovered positions held by each group on historical hindrances to Black male students achieving academic success.
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<td>14</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Each year, higher education institutions provide opportunities for students to enroll. For many Black male students, the opportunity to attend college is an initial step in creating sustainable success (Bush & Bush, 2005; Wood & Williams, 2013). Opportunities available to Black male college graduates have life-changing potential (Bush & Bush, 2010). While many students enter college with dreams of being successful, groups of students, namely minorities (racial and ethnic) struggle to succeed more than others (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The historical lack of persistence and completion for Black male students in higher education remains a cause for concern (Harper, 2006; Harris & Wood, 2013).

Community colleges are facing difficult financial times, while also dealing with low graduation rates (Marti, 2008). From 2000-2015, Black male students enrolled at community colleges were among the lowest for the number of male students to earn associate degrees when compared to their male counterparts in other ethnic groups (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], n.d.-a.). In 2009, nearly 55% of all Black male students who enrolled in higher education attended a community college, but nearly 12% dropped out after their first year (Urias & Wood, 2014). Urias and Wood (2014) explained after year two, dropout rates nearly tripled.

There are a variety of reasons that hinder Black male students from persisting in community colleges: lack of college readiness, difficulties establishing a sense of belonging, and a lack of positive faculty-student relationships (Bush & Bush, 2010;
Harris & Wood, 2013; Strayhorn, 2015; Wood & Turner, 2011). Black male students who participated in research studies about their experiences at community colleges told stories of racism, prejudice, isolation, and a lack of support—all making academic success difficult (Brooms & Perry, 2016; Perrakis, 2008).

Table 1.1 displays associate degree totals for male students enrolled in community colleges in New York State.

**Problem Statement**

Historically, negative social and academic misrepresentations of Black males have impacted how they are viewed in academic settings (Brooms & Perry, 2016). The belief that Black males are lazy and highly unintelligent serves as the basis for the development of attitudes, behaviors, and notions associated with their intellectual capabilities (Brooms & Perry, 2016). These counterproductive attitudes take a toll on Black male students in higher education. Given that Black male college students have often navigated emotionally draining experiences related to negative messages about their intelligence; over time, they have begun to disassociate themselves from the learning experience (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). As a result of their experiences, many Black male students have described institutions of higher learning as unreceptive and unsupportive environments that hinder academic success and cause harm to their psychological well-being (Smith et al., 2007).
## Table 1.1

**Associate Degrees Awarded by Postsecondary Institutions for Males by Race, 2000-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of Males Each Year</th>
<th>Total White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
<th>Total White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>231,645</td>
<td>166,322</td>
<td>22,147</td>
<td>23,350</td>
<td>12,339</td>
<td>2,294</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,193</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>238,109</td>
<td>170,622</td>
<td>22,806</td>
<td>23,963</td>
<td>13,256</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,154</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>253,451</td>
<td>179,163</td>
<td>25,591</td>
<td>26,461</td>
<td>14,057</td>
<td>2,618</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,561</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>260,033</td>
<td>183,819</td>
<td>25,961</td>
<td>27,828</td>
<td>13,907</td>
<td>2,740</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,778</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>267,536</td>
<td>188,569</td>
<td>27,151</td>
<td>29,658</td>
<td>13,802</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,582</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>270,095</td>
<td>190,139</td>
<td>27,619</td>
<td>30,040</td>
<td>14,224</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,299</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>275,187</td>
<td>191,565</td>
<td>28,273</td>
<td>31,646</td>
<td>15,510</td>
<td>2,873</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,320</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>282,521</td>
<td>194,099</td>
<td>30,016</td>
<td>33,817</td>
<td>15,936</td>
<td>3,003</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5,650</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>298,066</td>
<td>202,670</td>
<td>32,004</td>
<td>36,919</td>
<td>17,305</td>
<td>3,075</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6,093</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>322,747</td>
<td>215,977</td>
<td>36,148</td>
<td>42,210</td>
<td>18,268</td>
<td>3,555</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6,589</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>361,408</td>
<td>238,012</td>
<td>41,649</td>
<td>47,911</td>
<td>19,085</td>
<td>3,727</td>
<td>4,197</td>
<td>6,827</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>393,479</td>
<td>251,964</td>
<td>46,377</td>
<td>57,926</td>
<td>20,537</td>
<td>3,924</td>
<td>5,569</td>
<td>7,182</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>389,195</td>
<td>243,868</td>
<td>45,458</td>
<td>60,536</td>
<td>21,223</td>
<td>3,638</td>
<td>7,434</td>
<td>7,038</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>390,805</td>
<td>239,076</td>
<td>45,806</td>
<td>64,293</td>
<td>21,811</td>
<td>3,680</td>
<td>8,953</td>
<td>7,186</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, and from a historical perspective, bias impacts the perception others have toward Black males (Mitchell, 2015). Often, this may be unconscious. For example, in a presentation before faculty at Harvard University, Yale University Professor, Carl Dovidio, stated that White faculty members mastered the art of displaying unconscious bias by claiming not to see race or by being color-blind (Mitchell, 2015). Without the ability to see race or color, one must ask if in fact they are seen. Therefore, Black male students may have greater difficulty adjusting to college campuses that they perceive as unwelcoming, unsupportive or where they are invisible (Bridges, 2011; Harper & Davis, 2012; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007). To gain a modicum of success, Black male students have combated the presence of negative attitudes and behaviors from faculty members who are influenced by experiences and perceptions beyond what the student can control (Bridges, 2011; Harper & Davis, 2012; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007).

Academic achievement data about community college degree attainment reports that Black male community college students were and are still underperforming, have not received the support needed to be successful, and require greater attention to ensure they do not slip through the cracks at institutions that ignore their needs (NCES, n.d.-a.). However, missing from the discussion about Black male community college students and their experiences, are faculty members’ attitudes and behaviors towards Black male students for these students who they advise, counsel, and teach. Black male students’ perceptions of attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by college faculty members about their academic ability and level of intelligence are negative (Bridges, 2011; Harper & Davis, 2012; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007).
Issues impacting Black male community college students’ persistence are the basis for this study, specifically, perceptions of faculty and latent assumptions about Black male students and their academic capabilities. Further, this study explored experiences of Black male students as they move toward completion of their degree (persistence), despite systemic, preconceived notions held by faculty.

**Theoretical Rationale**

Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory guided this study. Historically, this theory has resonated with adult development; however, according to Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn (2009), it may also apply to college students.

Schlossberg’s (2011) theory provides a means to explain, analyze, and inform the process that adults traverse as they move through different life-altering events (Evans et al., 2009). Schlossberg’s theory was influenced by authors D. J. Levinson, Bernice Neugarten, Majorie Lowenthal, and David Chiriboga; all who, in one form or another, studied life transitions among adults (Evans et al., 2009). Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) defined a transition as “any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (p. 33). Schlossberg’s transition theory serves as a reminder that even though transitions provide an opportunity for improvement, there is no guarantee that the outcome will be positive (Schlossberg, 2011).

Three types of transition exist: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-event. Anticipated transitions may include, but are not limited to, major events in life that are usually expected to happen (Schlossberg, 2011). Examples of anticipated transitions are earning a high school diploma, getting a new job, going to college, getting married, or choosing to switch careers (Schlossberg, 2011). Unanticipated transitions are unexpected
events such as the sudden death of a loved one, a major illness, or getting laid off due to budget cuts (Schlossberg, 2011). Non-event transitions are the events that are expected to happen, but they never do, such as not marrying (Schlossberg, 2011). Anticipated transition was the focal point of this study, and the expectation was that Black male students would enroll in college and persist until graduation.

Included in Schlossberg’s (2011) theory is a system of support for coping with transitions known as the 4S model (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Everyone experiences transitions, yet each person handles them differently. Schlossberg (2011) posited that the 4S model is present in every transition. The four Ss are: situation, self, support, and strategies (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011).

Situation, the first factor within Schlossberg’s 4S model, refers to a particular incident or event that an individual encounters (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Of note is the importance of examining other situational factors that may cause a transition. Exploring how long a transition exists and whether the cause of the transition is identifiable are also important elements to a transition (Evans et al., 2009; Schlossberg, 2011).

Factor two of the 4S model, self, refers to an individual’s ability to deal with a particular situation (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Examination of self is separated into two groups: personal characteristics and psychological resources (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Personal characteristics are factors that help an individual create a greater sense of self (age, ethnicity, gender, religious belief, sexuality, and socioeconomic status) (Evans et
al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Everyone has unique talents as well as levels of abilities. Those factors influence how some individuals approach situations. For example, older students may have more life experiences than younger students, and thus they cope better in a given situation. Psychological resources are recognized as personality traits an individual possesses that influence how he or she handles transitions, which include resiliency, perseverance, and self-efficacy, among others (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011).

Support, Schlossberg’s third factor in the 4S model, focuses on social supports (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). This explanation of support includes an individual’s intimate relationships, family bonds, one’s circle of friends, and other systems of support (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Trusted support(s) and their positive impact during any transition provide individuals with the encouragement and assistance they need to be successful.

Strategies, the final factor of the 4S model, refers to tools that individuals employ to navigate transitions (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). In this phase of Schlossberg’s model, there are three categories of coping responses and four coping modes (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The three categories of coping responses are: change the situation (modify), control the meaning of the problem, and regulate the stress after the transition (manage). The four coping modes include information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior (Evans et al., 2010; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Even though specific strategies are independent, individuals in transition benefit from being flexible, and using a variety of methods.
Each category illustrates how an individual navigates a particular situation. For this study, factors from Schlossberg’s 4S model were used to explore preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by community college faculty that were directed at Black male students, and also explore Black male community college students’ lived experiences who are enrolled in full-time degree-seeking programs as they persisted toward graduation. Both groups of study participants (faculty and Black male students) held perceptions and experiences that were similar and dissimilar. For faculty participants, this study provided an opportunity to share honest feedback about Black male students. For student participants whose journeys were unique, and their level of preparedness was different, this study explored different strategies they employ to increase their likelihood of success in the face of preconceived notions.

**Statement of Purpose**

Although there is a growing body of information available related to persistence issues focusing on Black male students enrolled in higher education at 2-year institutions and their experiences, gaps remain (Bush & Bush, 2005, 2010). Research literature conducted recently has heavily focused on Black male students enrolled at 4-year institutions. This study explored perceptions of faculty and latent assumptions (attitudes and behaviors) about the academic capabilities of Black male students enrolled at seven SUNY community colleges in Central and Western New York (including the Finger Lakes region). Additionally, this study explored experiences and perceptions of Black male students as they moved toward the completion of their degree (persistence), despite systemic, preconceived notions held by faculty. Finally, this study explored ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed at Black male community college students.
SUNY campuses are divided into five regions within New York State (SUNY, n.d.-c.). In Figure 1.2, three areas color-coded by orange, purple and yellow (Western, Finger Lakes and Central, respectively) are the locations where faculty and students were targeted for this study (Office of General Services, n.d.).

![Figure 1.1. Map of New York State divided by Region.](image)

**Research Questions**

This research was directed by a phenomenological methodological research approach. One of the purposes of this study was to introduce faculty members into the discussion about the academic capabilities and experiences of Black male community college students. Black male students’ experiences in higher education are well-documented (Bush & Bush, 2010; Cuyjet, 1998; Flowers, 2006; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001; Harper & Davis, 2013; Harris & Wood, 2013; Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2011, 2012; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Urias & Wood, 2013, 2014; Wood, 2014a, 2014b; Wood & Palmer, 2014). However, for this study, attitudes held by faculty
members about Black male community college students was a new element introduced to the body of research about Black male students enrolled at community colleges related to their academic achievement and persistence in higher education. This phenomenological study addressed the following questions:

1. What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?
2. What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of preconceived notions held by college faculty?
3. From the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated?

**Significance of the Study**

This study has the potential to: (a) raise greater awareness about negative impacts of preconceived notions for a particular student population on college campuses, (b) address diversity on college campuses in meaningful ways that lead to an environment of intellectual co-existence and acceptance, (c) increase enrollment for colleges that are viewed as welcoming and affirming of divergent populations, and (d) increase understanding for Black male students about how to succeed in college.

**Definition of Terms**

*Community Colleges* – Two-year institutions that provide programs and majors that lead to earning a certificate or associate degree; also known as junior colleges.

*Persistence* – Continuous, semester-to-semester enrollment of working toward successfully completing of a college degree.
Chapter Summary

Higher education continues to provide individuals with opportunities for growth, and community colleges are a valuable component. Black male students are one of the many groups who have the opportunity to take advantage of the options available at community colleges. However, they have been historically at the bottom statistically when it comes to retention and graduation rates (NCES, n.d.-b.). The research available regarding Black male students’ experiences in higher education has focused on their experiences at 4-year institutions, to the exclusion of those enrolled at 2-year institutions (Wood & Turner, 2011). Further, missing from scholarly research literature on Black male students in higher education are faculty members’ attitudes and behaviors (preconceived notions) toward these students and their academic ability. Data gathered from faculty participants in this study provided insight that has been absent from the discussion relating to Black male students persisting in higher education settings.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the academic achievement, persistence, and completion rates of Black male students at community colleges. Chapter 3 outlines this study’s research design, methodology, and analysis process. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings, and Chapter 5 discusses findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The literature review provides information from studies conducted about the experiences of Black male students in higher education. The factors discussed in the literature about the obstacles facing Black male students from persisting toward degree attainment varies from student to student. However, similarities do exist. The articles included in the literature review explore the impact of internal (grit, motivation, and perseverance) and external (availability of tutoring support, mentoring, faculty interaction, welcoming environments, and family involvement) factors that affect students in both positive and negative ways. The research contained in these sources covers issues of academic achievement, retention, and degree completion of Black male students from quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Literature Review

Early experiences of Black males in education. Black male students are among the most scrutinized students in society (Husband, 2012; Tatum, 2015). Black male students are confronted with countless beliefs about their academic capabilities in educational settings. The assumptions and attitudes toward Black male students are not comparable to any other group in our society (Harper, 2012; Husband, 2012; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Tatum, 2015). Compounded by the beliefs that others have about the academic abilities of Black male students, the negative choices made by this group of males create more problems. The poor decisions and careless actions of
Black males within society has increased the negative preconceived notions held by educators at every level about Black males (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). As a result, Black male students entering educational institutions face preconceived notions that may have begun in their early childhood (Husband, 2012; Tatum, 2015). With negative attitudes about the academic capabilities of Black male students starting at such an early age, they have contributed to the disruption in these males’ academic trajectory as young learners and future scholars (Husband, 2012; Tatum, 2015).

Husband (2012) provided a multilayered approach to addressing the underachievement of Black boys in reading, which illustrates factors that contribute to the problem. Husband (2012) determined that gender differences, reading preferences, and neurological differences impact boys’ reading interests and success. In particular, boys experience less satisfaction and find less pleasure in reading than girls. Teachers in the literature were encouraged to make a greater effort to include the reading preferences of boys. Husband (2012) concluded that in doing so, Black boys would display an interest in reading and would be willing participants in reading activities. Another issue identified by Husband (2012) was the disproportionate disciplinary rates that impact the reading success of Black boys. There was a direct correlation between suspension rates and reading achievement (Anderson, Howard, & Graham, 2007). Anderson et al. (2007) found that the Black males suspended from school earned lower levels of reading achievement compared to students who were not suspended. Connected to the reading underachievement of Black boys was the impact of preconceived notions on their literacy attainment (Haddix, 2009; Husband, 2012). Teachers operating within these stereotypes contribute to the low reading achievement of Black boys by fostering attitudes and
behaviors that lower standards for this population (Husband, 2012; Irving & Hudley, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights (2014) reported, during the 2011-2012 academic school year, that Black male students were the most suspended student group among all students. Compared to the 6% of White male students suspended, Black male student suspension rates were more than three times greater. Black students made up only 16% of the total student enrollment compared to White students whose enrollment was at 51% during the 2011-2012 school year (U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights, 2014). Figure 2.1 displays the suspension rates of K-12 students in 2011-2012.

Figure 2.1. Out-of-School Suspension for K-12 Students in 2011-2012.

To improve the reading achievement of Black boys, Husband (2012) identified three areas of improvement. The first area was a comprehensive school shift. Husband recommended that educational institutions ensure Black boys remain in school as much as possible especially during reading instruction. As stated earlier, when suspended from
school, Black boys fall behind by not participating in treading activities. Current behavior policies need to be evaluated to identify ways to keep more Black male students in school instead of in conditions of suspension (Husband, 2012). The other two areas of improvement Husband (2012) suggested were in the classroom and with the curriculum. The researcher encouraged expanding reading materials and including more interactive activities that are inclusive when considering the needs of different audiences of students, especially Black boys. Missing from information about reading achievement of Black males is the attitudes and behaviors that teachers have about these students and their abilities (Haddix, 2009; Husband, 2012; Irving & Hundley, 2005; Tatum, 2015).

Tatum (2015) provided additional insight into the value of meaningful reading material for Black males. Tatum shared a brief story about the impact reading had on the life of Frederick Douglass. The story of an historical Black male figure, like Frederick Douglass, and the impact that reading had on Mr. Douglass’ life provided an understanding of the importance of reading for Black males (Tatum, 2015). One of the two books referenced by Tatum, *The Columbian Orator*, fueled Douglass to master the skill of reading and writing, which led to Douglass becoming a great writer and orator (Tatum, 2015). Douglass began reading *The Columbian Orator* around the age of 12 years, and he continued to learn how to read with the assistance of his slave master’s wife (Douglass, 1851). The slave master’s wife was instructed by her husband to stop helping Douglass learn how to read because of his belief that helping Blacks read would empower them to rebel against the control of Whites (Douglass, 1851). The historical examples of the importance of reading demonstrated by Douglass’s example has provided encouragement for Black male students to learn to read. Tatum (2015)
identified a guide for educators that contained four literacy needs to encourage Black males to read: academic, cultural, emotional, and social. Tatum (2015) believed that support in these areas demonstrated a commitment to the growth of Black male students as scholars, celebrated their societal impact, recognized them as equally important as other ethnic groups, and ensured that they would be prepared to thrive in educational environments that once viewed them as weak and unprepared. Incorporating meaningful reading material is one method that is used to shape Black males for a life of success, and it can empower them to develop positive academic behaviors (Tatum, 2015).

Tatum (2015) also recommended books to educators based on reading levels with a summary of each book. The books identified are all culturally relevant and provide a sense of commonality for Black males in grades 6-12 (Tatum, 2015). Tatum advocated that Black males read enabling material such as books that carry a social, cultural, spiritual, political, or fiscal focus. Tatum expressed that the process used to engage Black males to read must change. The researcher believed that by providing different texts that cater to the development of valuable life skills and that give insight into how success could improve the desire to read would help support the improved life trajectory of Black male students. Once Black male students start to read more, their increased activity can provide the opportunity to explore discussions and activities that reinforce comprehension and expand knowledge (Tatum, 2015). The article also identified negative stereotyping in schools by teachers and administrators as an external factor that impedes the academic success of Black male students.

**Institutional issues affecting persistence.** Hotchkins and Dancy (2015) analyzed the importance of a sense of belonging, race, and leadership to understand the
on-campus experiences of Black male student leaders. The study focused on the experiences of four Black males as student leaders within student organizations at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and the impact of microaggressions. Using a qualitative, ethnographic research approach, this study incorporated narrative methodology (open-ended interviews) that presented the experiences of Black male student leaders. For their study, microaggressions were defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). In Hotchkins and Dancy’s study, Black male students expressed feelings of frustration due to the constant presence of racist attitudes and behaviors. The researchers concluded that Black male students experienced racial battle fatigue and racial microaggressions meant to make Black students feel inferior while confirming ideas of White supremacy.

Through the use of open-ended interview questions, two persistence themes emerged, namely, reactive invisibility and responsive-interest preservation. Both themes provided insight into the effects of operating in unwelcoming academic environments for Black male student leaders. When incorporating reactive invisibility, Black male student leaders resorted to desperate behaviors like canceling meetings, not attending meetings, and not attending social events that created distance and encouraged others to pass on the opportunity to interact (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). When Black male student leaders incorporated the responsive-interest preservation tactic, it was to establish a sense of belonging among their White peers without having to lose sight of their individuality (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). Study participants explained the tactic was used to foster
relationships with White students who supported the work of Black organizations on campus while acknowledging that White people have privilege and power that Blacks do not. It was discovered that the effect of racial battle fatigue took a toll on the academic achievement of Black male student leaders.

Identity development. Combined with the impact of institutional factors on academic achievement, persistence, and graduation rates of Black male students, the lack of positive identity development negatively impacts the success of Black male students in higher education (Harper & Davis, 2012; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). The lack of positive identity development for Black male students hinders their ability to value academic opportunities that have the potential to remove stereotypes related their academic capabilities (Harper & Davis, 2012; Harris et al., 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Mentoring programs for Black male students are viewed as a vehicle that provides supportive relationships to raise awareness about the power of education and the historical impact of advancement for Black people (Harper & Davis, 2012; Harris et al., 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Through mentoring programs, Black male students gain an understanding of their potential to be successful students. Through positive examples from other Black men in mentoring programs, Black male students develop a better understanding of the impact their academic success has on changing societal and educational attitudes (Harper & Davis, 2012; Harris et al., 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012).

Harper and Davis (2012) further examined the identity development among Black male students, the students’ beliefs in the power of education, and the opportunities that came with earning a college degree. The qualitative study, which used a counternarrative
approach, sought to understand the role identity played in the lives of Black male students whose success plan included graduating from high school, immediately enrolling in higher education, achieving a graduate degree, and entering a career in education (Harper & Davis, 2012). Using a counternarrative to showcase Black male student success, the purpose of their study was to use student stories to dispel myths and share perspectives from student participants that Black male students do not value education or have goals beyond a high school diploma.

Harper and Davis’s (2012) study utilized a content analysis of essay applications for the University of Pennsylvania’s Grad Prep Academy, which is a program for juniors in college who plan to pursue a doctorate in education (Harper & Davis, 2012). Through an analysis of 304 essays submitted by Black male students seeking program acceptance, 10 students were selected to participate as program scholars. As a result of their acceptance, each student participated in a 2-hour focus group interview during their visit to the University of Pennsylvania (Harper & Davis, 2012).

Three themes emerged from the study: recognition of the disparities in education, education as a tool for leveling the playing field for Black male students, and a detailed purpose and plan for earning a doctorate in education (Harper & Davis, 2012). The findings from the study illustrated the importance of education for Black male students and the importance of positive identity development for Black scholars (Harper & Davis, 2012). Student interest in applying for the program demonstrated the value Black male students place on getting an education beyond high school. Confidence and goal setting were the results of positive identity development as expressed by the focus group participants (Harper & Davis, 2012). Study participants expressed that the development
of positive identity development could assist Black male students to achieve academic success if more of them made the commitment to further their education. The desire for these Black male students to attain doctoral degrees was a sign of perseverance, a pledge of cultural excellence, and a reflection of the positive identity development to overcome years of generational curses associated with their families (Harper & Davis, 2012). The study results suggest engaging faculty to gain an understanding of effective pedagogy while understanding how the historically low expectations held by faculty impact Black male students.

Jaggers and Iverson (2012) conducted a qualitative study focused on race and masculinity in residence halls for Black male students enrolled at a PWI in the Midwest United States. Through purposeful sampling, three focus groups ranging in size from six – eight participants discussed commonly shared experiences, raised awareness about important issues, and provided support for each other. A total of 23 study participants, ranging in age from 18 to 23 years old explained how issues impacted their ability to succeed on campus. Issues included being a first-generation student and first in their family to attend college, feeling academically unprepared, and needing to overcome preconceived notions from college personnel and other college students (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Black male participants highlighted positive examples and their importance as a means to dismiss preconceived notions (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012).

According to Jaggers & Iverson (2012), Black male student participants identified four factors which contributed to poor treatment they endured in the residence halls: racial issues with roommates, defending their manhood, challenging racism, and having to prove themselves. Their comments and feedback indicated these students felt lonely
and ignored. Portrayals of Black men on television influenced how they were viewed by others. Black male study participants described mental and emotional struggles of constantly having to combat stereotypes as draining (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Student conduct disparities within campus residence halls made Black male student study participants feel helpless because, no matter what they did, they would face disciplinary action while their White peers could violate various outlawed policies such as the drug and alcohol ban or get into physical altercations with no substantial punishment (Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Black males also noticed disparities in how they were treated by residence hall staff members, as well as other campus personnel, like campus police officers. Students felt compelled to be on alert as a result of having to defend themselves on a regular basis.

**Academic achievement.** Academic achievement for Black male students enrolled at community colleges determines their ability to successfully persist toward degree attainment (Guiffrida, 2015; Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Urias & Wood, 2014; Wood, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013). As Black male students take advantage of available academic resources and systems of support on campus, they increase their success in college (Guiffrida, 2015; Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Urias & Wood, 2014; Wood, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013).

Mason (1998) identified a trend in the early 1990s where non-traditional-aged Black male students dropped out of community college in Chicago at high rates before completing their degree. A non-traditional student was a student who was older than 24-years old, and enrolled part-time or living off-campus. A total of 93 students participated
in interviews. Of the 93 interviews, eight of those included four students who dropped out after their first semester and four who returned for the second semester (Mason, 1998). Using a casual comparative design for cross-sequential data sampling, Mason (1998) developed a persistence model that supported Black male students and enabled them to have greater success in urban community colleges. Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (structured interviews) research methods were used to gather data. Mason reviewed the work of scholars whose research on student retention included Astin (1982), Spady (1970; 1971), Tinto (1975), and Pascarella (1980), and it expanded on the work of Bean and Metzner (1985) (Mason, 1998). This study found that in a span of 20 years, from 1970 to 1990, ratios for Black male to Black female students increased from 1:1 to 1:1.5, and degree attainment during the same time went from 1:2 to 1:4 (Mason, 1998).

Decreases in degree attainment of Black male students supported information about their lack of academic achievement and persistence (Bush & Bush, 2010; NCES, n.d.-a.; Wood & Turner, 2011).

Findings from this study confirmed the importance of developing a persistence model for Black male students. Data provided insight into student the success factors relating to Black male students in college. Results from this study further demonstrated that students with high academic goals experienced lower dropout rates, relied heavily on the encouragement they received outside of school when things got difficult, and favored low costs to attend school (Mason, 1998). As a result of the study’s findings, recommendations for continued improvement were provided. Areas of improvement examined classroom and non-classroom activities and supports. Mason (1998) suggested institutions look to improve structured advising; academic and financial aid workshops;
career and job placement services; faculty and staff professional development (PD); and student activities on campus that helped support the academic achievement of Black male students. In addition to staff development for faculty, opportunities for faculty to discuss their attitudes and beliefs toward the academic capabilities of Black male students would further illustrate preconceived notions held about Black male students.

Harper (2012) released a qualitative study that examined Black male achievement in college as an anti-deficit response to preconceived notions about the academic achievement of Black males. Published by the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, this study provided insight and information from 219 Black males interviewed from 42 different institutions of higher learning across America. Study participants identified individual, familial, and academic resources that contributed to their success. High expectations from family members, a former teacher or mentor, and Black males upperclassmen was key to the success of the Black males participating at their respective institutions (Harper, 2012). These insights supported the information provided by Mason (1998) that highlighted the importance of encouragement outside the classroom. Participants highlighted the dire need to overcome preconceived notions about their academic ability by the high grades they earned, being involved on campus, connecting with other motivated students, and seeking relationships with faculty.

The study’s recommendations provided tools for subsequent generations of Black male college students based on information shared by the study participants. The Black male students suggested that encouraging Black males at an early age to consider college, providing regular training for K-12 teachers and college personnel to learn effective ways
to engage Black male students, and creating opportunities for Black male students to fellowship at their respective institutions, are ways to promote academic achievement for Black males (Harper, 2012). Examples of successful Black male students in the Harper study provided hope that this group of students did not have to settle for the stereotypes; however, the institutional support around them must be consistent and equally as committed (Harper, 2012).

Strayhorn and DeVita (2010) examined academic practices at different types of institutions in higher education and provided research-based evidence of effective strategies for engaging Black male students. This quantitative study conducted a secondary analysis of the 4th edition of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire. Specifically, the study participants included a sample of 149 freshman and sophomore Black male students who lived on campus, not married, and enrolled full-time at a 4-year institution. The CSEQ is a nationally recognized questionnaire used by institutions across the country to gather data from students about their experiences in three specific areas: college activities, college environments, and academic achievement. The goal of the Strayhorn and DeVita study was to examine the differences in the educational experiences inside and outside the classroom for Black male students compared to their peers to gain an understanding of successful practices for Black male students enrolled in higher education (Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010). Study participants answered questions regarding their interaction and frequency of those interactions with faculty members by institution type.

Results of this self-reporting study provided information to student affairs practitioners and institutions of higher education regarding supporting Black male
students’ needs attending different types of institutions. This study concluded that the type of institution does not guarantee support for Black male students; a *one size fits all* approach for Black males does not work everywhere, student-faculty contact, and active learning positively impacted students at different types of institutions (Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010). Further, this study provided suggestions for increasing faculty-student interactions for Black male students. Strayhorn and DeVita (2010) recommended local and national professional development opportunities where faculty learned effective ways to engage Black male student at their respective institutions.

Wood and Palmer (2013) examined goals of Black male students enrolled in community colleges to understand the lack of academic and psychosocial support limiting their academic achievement. This quantitative study also compared Black male students’ goals to their cross-cultural male peers. A total of 2,200 male students met the research criteria for this study. This study’s researchers used four control variables: student age, income ranking, degree goals, and grade-point average (GPA), and one dependent variable: race/ethnicity, to analyze differences between peer groups (Wood & Palmer, 2013). Important to Black male students’ academic achievement at community colleges was a process of developing personal goals and exploring how those goals lined up with life goals (Wood & Palmer, 2013). This study used information from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS study).

Research findings, in the form of top goals for Black male students from the 2004 and 2006 data included: consistent employment, financial stability, being recognized as a leader within their community, free time, and starting a family (Wood & Palmer, 2013). These findings provided insight into how institutions and student affairs personnel might
approach supporting Black male students who wanted to have a positive impact on society and become financially stable (Wood & Palmer, 2013).

To further illustrate academic achievement issues impacting Black male students’ graduation rates at public community colleges, Urias and Wood (2014) used national data about common influences that impact student success. This quantitative study explored the role institutional types of community colleges and unique features that are available to assisting Black male students to persist toward graduation. The goal of the study included two points. First, the authors believed their research-based findings would enable other institutions to improve support for Black male students’ success. Second, the authors wanted to identify effective types of institutions that supported the persistence of Black male students and would benefit them, as well as giving information to other institutions that were looking to improve (Urias & Wood, 2014). Information from a total of 646 public 2-year institutions with a minimum of 10 Black male student graduates was analyzed for this study. Five research questions, associated with the following institutional factors, guided this study: location, size, governance practice, profile, and urbanization (Urias & Wood, 2014). Urias and Wood (2014) suggested examining the organizational culture of successful institutions compared to those that were not as successful in assisting Black male students toward graduation.

The findings of the study provided insight regarding issues that hindered Black male students from persisting and graduating (Urias & Wood, 2014). Findings from this research study indicated enrollment size, enrollment status, and a community college’s setting/location are positive persistence factors for Black male community college students. Persistence and graduation rates of Black male students were not uniform at
every community college. Black male students increased their chances of success when they enrolled at institutions that encouraged full-time course loads and institutions with smaller enrollments (Urias & Wood, 2014). Setting/location of an institution also made a difference. Institutions located in rural areas had higher completion and graduation rates than institutions found in cities and suburbs (Urias & Wood, 2014). Community colleges in the Southeast region of the United States were most effective for Black male students’ graduation and completion rates compared to other regions (Urias & Wood, 2014).

Wood (2013) also used Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) data and compared Black male students enrolled at public community colleges to Black male students enrolled at public 4-year institutions to examine similarities and differences. This quantitative study explored unique characteristics for each group of Black male students. A total of 533 students fit the study criteria for inclusion in the study (Wood & Palmer, 2013). Assuming all Black male students enrolled in higher education are the same failed to recognize their differences in background, socioeconomic status, age, and life experiences that each student brings to their respective institution (Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Wood, 2013). Using a definition created by Nevarez and Wood (2010), backgrounds “include characteristics associated with students’ personal, social, and economic status, previous academic performance, as well as their parental socioeconomic status and level of education among other variables” (p. 87). Data analysis for this study was similar to BPS data from 2004/2006, which was used in a study by Wood and Palmer (2013) and explored Black male community college students’ goals.
Wood (2013) detailed differences among 2-year and 4-year Black male students. Community college students were more likely to be older, have children, be married, and they took a break between their graduation from high school and their enrollment in college compared to their peers who attended a 4-year institution (Mason, 1998; Wood, 2013). These findings support information discovered from findings reported by Mason (1998) about Black male demographics at community colleges. The findings from this study also suggested incorporating a male mentoring initiative (MMI), focusing on academic, career, social, and personal needs of Black male community college students to provide encouragement and support toward graduation. A MMI would serve as a consistent presence to support academic achievement and persistence of Black male students and other male students of color in need of similar supports. Another recommendation by Wood (2013) suggested providing inclusive services such as: supporting the needs of students and their family; academic tutoring support; professional development opportunities, which would include guest speakers; career workshops focused on pursuing education beyond a 4-year degree; and specialized student support services such as required orientations sessions.

**Persistence and retention.** The issues impacting the persistence and retention of Black male students at community colleges are important to identity because they represent barriers to success. Information about the effect of college selection on persistence for Black and Latino males explained what relationships exist (Wood & Harris, 2015a). Additional research on the persistence and retention of Black male students and their experiences added to the information regarding their college experiences (Hagedorn et al., 2001; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Palmer, Davis, &
Maramba, 2011; Strayhorn, 2014; Wood, 2014b). Information gathered from these studies added to existing literature related to this group of students and the areas of concern regarding obstacles hindering their success. Also, the information provided insight for effective interventions and assistance that increased Black male students’ chances of being successful.

Wood and Harris (2015a) examined college selection factors and persistence for Black and Latino males to determine a possible relationship. Three questions guided the quantitative study that related to main-choice considerations, the importance of selection variables on persistence, and a possible correlation between the factors that aid in the decision to attend an institution. This study conducted by Wood and Harris appeared to be the first of its kind to examine the influences of college selection on persistence for male students of color at 2-year institutions. Data was courtesy of the 2006 collection of the Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS). ELS is a nationally recognized survey that begins tracking students in high school and continues through their life after high school whether that includes going to college or seeking employment immediately after graduation. More than 71,500 eligible students qualified to participate in this study with Black male students representing a weighted sample of 32,587. Criteria for student participation was enrollment at a public community college and a male who identified as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino. Wood and Harris (2015a) analyzed survey data that explored the possibility of a relationship between the process of college selection and student persistence for Black and Latino male students with low academic achievement.
Findings provided insight for institutions and supported Black and Latino male students (Wood & Harris, 2015a). For Black male students, low tuition costs, financial aid assistance, high job placement rates, institution size, and acceptance of credits from previously attended institutions were key factors in the college selection process (Wood & Harris, 2015a). Additionally, this study provided suggestions to community college personnel and to students who possessed characteristics that put them in greater jeopardy of dropping out early. With the information from Wood and Harris’s (2015a) study, community colleges were encouraged to utilize early alert systems, intrusive counseling and advising, and peer mentoring to offset Black and Latino male students who had high dropout rates (Wood and Harris, 2015a). These supports could help establish healthy relationships with Black and Latino male students and support previously identified information about Black male students at community colleges (Mason, 1998; Urias & Wood, 2014; Wood, 2013, 2014a).

Hagedorn et al. (2001) examined factors and improved retention among Black male students enrolled at an urban community college. This quantitative study explored factors that influenced retention efforts for 202 Black male students attending a community college. Study participants were enrolled during the 1995 fall semester, 1996 fall semester, or 1997 spring semester with aspirations to earn a degree or certificate (Hagedorn et al., 2001). Study information was courtesy of the Computerized Assessment and Placement tests (CAPP), which used math, reading, and writing assessments to test incoming students’ skill levels and then determine proper courses for those students (Hagedorn et al., 2001).
The Hagedorn et al. (2001) study used three logistic regression equations and analyzed student retention during each semester. Findings from this study: age, enrollment status, and the importance of personal goals were identified as factors that increased retention for Black male community college students. A common factor of retention in each semester was age because younger students had better retention (Hagedorn et al., 2001). Age being a factor of persistence is in line with data previously presented that older Black male students have outside responsibilities that impact their ability to succeed (Mason, 1998; Wood, 2013). Full-time enrollment was another indicator of retention and persistence (Hagedorn et al., 2001; Mason, 1998; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Urias & Wood, 2014). Hagedorn et al. (2001) suggested developing specialized programs for Black male students while encouraging community colleges to “recognize the population and the importance of African American male students and to develop policies specifically aimed at this subpopulation” (p. 260).

Wood (2014b) examined academic variables and their impact on persistence for Black male students enrolled at community colleges. This quantitative study used data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) and explored the experiences of Black male students relating to the process of improving institutional practices and procedures to increase persistence (Wood, 2014b). A weighted sample size of nearly 100,200 Black male students had data analyzed as a result of this study. For this study, persistence and attainment had separate meanings. Wood (2014b) defined persistence as a student’s positive progression and continued enrollment in college, while attainment was defined as achieving goals related to earning a degree, certificate, or
transferring (Wood, 2014b). The 3-year graduation and completion rates of Black male students were the lowest among male ethnic community college students (Wood, 2014b).

Findings from this study provided additional insight regarding Black male student persistence and attainment at community colleges (Wood, 2014b). Findings from this study explained Black male community college students who received an incomplete grade, had a high GPA, repeated a course seeking a higher grade, and had informal meetings with faculty were more likely to persist (Wood, 2014b). As discussed by other researchers, faculty interaction remained a positive indicator of persistence for the Black male students in community colleges (Bush & Bush, 2010; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Wood, 2014b; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood & Turner, 2011). Wood (2014b) suggested institutions of higher learning make a commitment to hire faculty members who possessed the ability, and demonstrated the desire, to support Black male students.

Palmer et al. (2009) explored persistence and retention challenges facing underprepared Black male students enrolled at an historically black college or university (HBCU). This qualitative study, using in-depth interviews supported by using an open-end questionnaire, explored the experiences of Black male students who entered the institution through a summer program. Using an epistemological approach while incorporating data analysis elements of a grounded theory, this study sought to develop meaning through human interaction (Palmer et al., 2009). The purpose of the study was to understand the factors that impacted the success of students who participated in the institution’s remedial program but managed to persist toward graduation. The institution’s 6-week summer remedial program served as a proactive mechanism for Black male students who did not meet the institution’s academic qualifications. The
sample size for this study was 111 Black male students. With information about lacking academic preparation hindering the persistence of Black male community college students, this study provided important information relating to supporting academically underprepared Black male students. Six weeks of instruction and support worked to prepare students for classes in the fall (Palmer et al., 2009). Black male student participants entered the program with different challenges to overcome (financial aid issues, inability to seek academic help, family support, local community issues, student participation, and persistence) (Palmer et al., 2009).

Findings from the study, using snowball sampling, 11 students participated and illustrated problems that impacted their ability to persist toward graduation (Palmer et al., 2009). Three themes emerged as findings from this study: reluctance to ask for help due to pride, lack of financial support, and dysfunction in their personal and home lives that impacted their education (Palmer et al., 2009). With the additional information gained from Black male students about their experiences, college personnel received insight needed to develop processes that improved persistence rates (Palmer et al., 2009). Palmer et al. (2009) explained that connecting Black male students with faculty members invested in their success had potential financial implications such as the opportunity to earn paid internship opportunities.

**Sense of belonging.** Creating a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for Black males was essential to their progression in higher education, especially community colleges (David et al., 2015; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014; Wells, 2008; Wood et al., 2015; Wood & Harris, 2015b). Expanding social and cultural connections of Black male students on campus can create a greater sense of belonging. Providing Black
male students with opportunities to meet and engage other students from similar backgrounds helped them develop a sense of belonging and connectedness as valuable members of the campus community (David et al., 2015; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Wells, 2008; Wood et al., 2015; Wood & Harris, 2015b; Woodward & Howard, 2015). Institutions that provided opportunities to celebrate the culture of African American/Black people demonstrated a commitment that made Black male students feel safe on campus (David et al., 2015; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Wells, 2008; Wood et al., 2015; Wood & Harris, 2015b).

David et al. (2015) examined barriers to success for community college students. This quantitative study included a two-step analysis, including the creation of student focus groups that led to the creation of a campus-wide survey (David et al., 2015). The main goals of the study included a further examination of the information from focus group data and verifying the information that addressed the barriers that needed immediate attention (David et al., 2015). A sample of 2,886 students were identified as meeting the study’s requirements and invited by e-mail to participate in this study’s survey. As a result, 293 students completed the survey.

Findings and recommendations of this quantitative study provided information to understand issues faced by Black male community college students and possible supports (David et al., 2015). Results from this study found Black students experienced lower levels of positive sense of belonging, greater need for financial and travel support related to attending college, and greater need for academic support. Black students experienced greater levels of difficulty adjusting at community colleges. Black students were placed into developmental courses at a higher rate than any other group of study participants.
This information supports the results from Palmer et al. (2009) regarding the support needed for Black male students who are academically underprepared. Financial issues also hinder the academic achievement of Black students. Black students experience greater difficulty with funding their education and academic-related travel to and from class safely (David et al., 2015). Students with difficulty covering the cost of attending college spend increased hours working instead of studying, getting tutored, or participating in other campus activities (David et al., 2015). Information gathered from this study highlights related information about the importance of financial aid assistance related to Black male students persisting at community colleges (Wood & Harris, 2015a).

Wood and Harris (2015b) examined the impact of engagement on the sense of belonging for Black male students enrolled at community colleges. The quantitative study used a multilevel structure of variables to analyze information from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). CCSSE is a nationally recognized assessment tool used to support community colleges with educational improvement related to learning and retention. At level one, enrollment information, age, credits completed, GPA, and remedial courses were control variables. At level two, institution size and urbanization were control variables. The sample size for this study was 11,113 Black male students from 260 community colleges. Data analyzed for this study was gathered from a 3-year cohort of the CCSSE’s 2011 edition.

Findings from the Wood and Harris (2015b) quantitative study, which examined the potential relationship between sense of belonging and engagement, provided insight about Black male students’ experiences enrolled at community colleges (Wood & Harris,
2015b). Results identified consistent student-faculty interactions, being exposed to
diversity, and access to student support services were significant factors contributing to a
sense of belonging for Black male students at community colleges (Wood & Harris,
2015b). However, Black male students who were actively engaged in their educational
goals experienced a lower sense of belonging (Wood & Harris, 2015b). One possible
explanation provided by Wood and Harris (2015b) for a lowered sense of belonging
could be institutional racism. Wood and Harris (2015b) hinted at preconceived notions
being held by various members of campus communities, including faculty, which
contributed to a lacking sense of belonging experienced by Black male students on
campus.

Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014) examined the impact of social and cultural capital
on the Black and Latino students enrolled at community colleges. This qualitative study
incorporated the cultural capital conceptual framework to understand successful habits
for Black and Latino students in courses that led to their persistence from semester to
semester and to graduation. Using purposive sampling, students targeted to participate
needed to have a GPA of 2.5 or higher and self-identity as African American/Black or
Latino. The campus involvement and support system themes demonstrated by the
findings explain how important creating a positive sense of belonging is for Black and
Latino males in higher education (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014).

Three themes emerged that were influential to increasing academic success and
sense of belonging for Black and Latino students were student-faculty relationships,
family support, and campus engagement and support (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). A
total of 22 students who participated in an undocumented number of focus groups were a
combination of full-time and part-time students, ranged in age from 19 to 60-years old, and had GPAs ranging from 2.56 to 4.0 (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). While there were no Black male students who participated in this study due to work and family obligations, findings from study participants support information about the issues Black male students endure at community colleges. Faculty-student engagement and family support was a positive indicator for success, which also impacts Black male persistence at community colleges (Bush & Bush, 2010; Harper, 2012; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Wood, 2014b; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood & Turner, 2011).

**Missing faculty voices.** Historical obstacles faced by Black male students in higher education are still present today (Guiffrida, 2015; Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010; Urias & Wood, 2014; Wood, 2013, 2014a; Wood & Palmer, 2013). Scholars and researchers continue to conduct studies to raise awareness about Black male students and their needs as students in higher education, but the focus is shifting. Information presented by articles referenced in this chapter highlighted experiences Black male students have at 2-year institutions compared to information available about the experiences of Black male students at 4-year institutions (David et al., 2015; Hagedorn et al., 2001; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Wells, 2008; Wood, 2014b; Wood et al., 2015; Wood & Harris, 2015b). However, the voice of faculty is missing within discussions about the attitudes and beliefs of Black male students’ academic capabilities (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood, 2014a).

Bush and Bush (2010) explored the impact of community college institutional factors on academic achievement and persistence rates of Black male students. Persistence rates represented the percentage of students enrolled in courses for
consecutive semesters (Bush & Bush, 2010). The scope of the study included interactions Black male students had with instructors, their feelings about campus culture, their ability to connect with their peers, and how those factors influenced their success. This study used a mixed-methods approach that included a quantitative, analytical, secondary analysis using descriptive, correlational, and multiple regression statistics, which illustrated an initial understanding of the students’ academic achievement. Also, the researchers examined institutional factors of a community college in California and Black male student success (Bush & Bush, 2010).

Results of this study illustrated the disparity in academic achievement, persistence, and graduation rates among Black male students within California’s community college system and at Inland Community College. According to Bush and Bush (2010), student involvement included participation in clubs on campus, student government, and co-curricular organizations. The environment Black male community college students were in played a key part in their academic success (Bush & Bush, 2010). Although faculty members did not participate in this study, the authors’ recommendations included hiring more faculty that are invested in the success of Black male students and encouraged those same faculty members to include aspects of societal influences involving Black people as a sign of equality and inclusion.

Wood (2014a) examined the perceived lack of interest of Black male students enrolled at a public community college. This qualitative study conducted 28 in-depth interviews with Black male students to gather information about their experiences. Using semi-structured interviews provided opportunities, for greater understanding, that incorporated additional questions not included in this study’s original plan. Students
chosen to participate were a result of convenience and snowball sampling. The 28 student participants explained how the impact of external perceptions from faculty members and other cross cultural peers supported disengagement (Wood, 2014a). As a result of interviews conducted with student participants, academic disengagement had a direct impact on students’ academic achievement (Wood, 2014a).

Findings from this study indicated Black male students chose to demonstrate academic disengagement which directly impacted their success. Personal accounts by Black male student participants illustrated their thoughts and feelings related to their perceived negative interactions with faculty, staff, and other students (Wood, 2014a). Student participants expressed their perceived academic inferiority provided an uncomfortable environment. Black male student participants used negative identifiers to imply feelings such as “dumb, ignorant, and “stupid” to illustrate how they believed they were viewed in class by faculty and other students (Wood, 2014a, p. 792). Those identifiers exhibited a lack of support available in class for Black male students. One Black male study participant explained (Wood, 2014a):

Not only that, it’s like I look around, and I feel like people were looking at me, and saying, “Why is this guy here? What the f**k! Why are you here?” Why? Is this a joke? I needed the most help on my writing, and the teachers was lookin’ at me like . . . “hhhhh [exhale], here we go. You know, we got a retarded kid in class now.” (p. 792)

For many Black male student participants in this study, perceptions held by faculty and other students of their lack of intelligence caused them to demonstrate behaviors that resulted in low academic achievement (Wood, 2014a).
Chapter Summary

When examining factors that influence success in the educational career of Black male students from K-12 to higher education, results suggest there is room for improvement. Black males enrolled at community colleges present diversity relating to age, socioeconomic status, family support and responsibilities, relationship status, employment, and identity development. Each factor directly impacts their ability to be successful, overcome obstacles, and persist toward graduation. This chapter provided perspectives from Black males that expressed their experiences in higher education related to academic achievement and persistence toward graduation. Also, perceptions that college faculty and other students have about Black male students contradicted how Black males view themselves. The mental, emotional, and social toll that preconceived attitudes and behaviors took on Black male students impacted their academic achievement and persistence. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive explanation of the study’s research methodology.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

Starting at a very early age, Black male students face preconceived notions about their academic ability (Husband, 2012; Tatum, 2015). Universal stereotypes continue, even as Black male students progress through grade school and enter college (Harper, 2012; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012). Although Black male students represent a diverse group of students in terms of regarding age, career goals, degree aspirations, and socioeconomic background; college faculty and staff assume they are all the same, and that they do not care about education (Harper, 2012).

More Black male students than ever before have chosen to attend 2-year institutions, instead of 4-year institutions, to begin their educational pursuits (Wood & Williams, 2013). According to a report by the Condition of Education (NCES, 2015), 2-year institutions are less expensive, provide extensive degree and certificate options, and have smaller classroom sizes, which are attractive to the overall needs of Black male college students. Despite advantages that 2-year institutions offer, Black male students remain at the bottom in categories that measure facing attitudes and behaviors from other members of the campus community about who they are and their capabilities, which may impact their success in higher education (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007).

Factors that contribute to preconceived attitudes and behaviors associated with academic capabilities of Black male college students affect these students in different
ways. There are studies that explain how Black male students face negative stereotypes that impact their academic, mental and emotional well-being while on campus (Harper, 2012; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007; Wood, 2014a). Other studies explain how Black male students face negative expectations from other students and college personnel based on what they see on television or read in print (Bell, 2010, 2014; Bridges, 2011).

The methodology for this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is a universal term that represents ways to gain understanding, capture shared experiences, and educate others about the lived experiences or anomalies associated with a particular group (Mason, 1996). Qualitative research has historically provided opportunities to conduct extensive information gathering about a phenomenon that usually incorporates the use of observations, rich descriptions, and narratives (Anyan, 2013). Using processes and procedures, like field observations and in-depth or open-ended interviews, qualitative researchers use these techniques to gather and interpret data (Sandelowski, 2004).

A qualitative phenomenological research approach guided this study. This methodological process provided the researcher with the opportunity to gain perspective from individuals experiencing a similar phenomenon (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). LoBiondo-Wood & Haber (2010) explained a phenomenological approach as a method of formulating knowledge through dialogue with individuals existing within a particular experience. Departing from other qualitative studies that include the lived experiences and perceptions of Black male community college students, this study also engaged college faculty to assess their attitudes, behaviors, and preconceived notions toward Black male community college students.
The goal of this study was to gain insight and information from faculty who had not been included in the discussion previously; while continuing to gather additional information from enrolled Black male students about supporting this group of students toward positive academic achievement and persistence toward graduation. For this study, persistence was defined as the process of working toward degree completion and graduation beyond a student’s first semester.

This study was guided by Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, to explore strategies used by Black male community college students to persist toward degree completion. This study’s research questions included:

1. What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?
2. What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of preconceived notions held by college faculty?
3. From the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated?

This qualitative study included an anonymous questionnaire disseminated to and completed by community college faculty, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Black male students who attended a community college. For research studies using a phenomenological research methodological approach, introducing a questionnaire can provide an alternative method for collecting sensitive data (Allen, 2016; Creswell, 2016). For this study, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, an anonymous, electronic, self-completed, self-reported questionnaire was thought to provide the best opportunity to gather such information. Creswell (2016) stated that use of a questionnaire provided a
valuable option for researchers needing to capture sensitive data. An anonymous questionnaire created and distributed through Qualtrics provided opportunities to gather unfiltered data. Qualtrics is an electronic, web-based tool used to gather information anonymously (Qualtrics, n.d.). This questionnaire allowed faculty to provide anonymous feedback without identifying themselves or their institution, thereby increasing the chances of gaining unfiltered, trustworthy feedback. The questionnaire utilized in this study was constructed and modified using questions from a collection of assessment tools used by colleges, universities, and non-profit organizations gathered by Lane Community College’s Cultural Competency Professional Development and Implementation Committee (Engaging Diversity, n.d.).

Lane Community College is an Achieving the Dream Institution. Achieving the Dream is a national consortium of community colleges focused on improving community college student success (Achieving the Dream, n.d.-c.). Community colleges in the Achieving the Dream network achieve Leader College status by demonstrating three years of sustained student success improvement and commitment to: “leadership; use of evidence to improve programs and services; broad engagement; systemic institutional improvement; and equity” (Achieving the Dream, n.d.-a.). As a result, Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges are expected to mentor other colleges within the Achieving the Dream network of institutions. There are at least seven Achieving the Dream institutions located in New York State, and at least one participated (student and faculty), in this study.

Student participants were able to talk about their experience while enrolled at a community college. The one-on-one interview format allowed for guided discussions
and open exchanges (Creswell, 2016). Students were expected to provide insight into their experiences inside and outside of class, and other contributing factors related to their persistence toward graduation.

**Research Context**

The setting for this study included community colleges that are part of the State University of New York (SUNY) higher education system. Specifically, the target area for this study was SUNY community colleges located in Central and Western New York, including the Finger Lakes, regions. Student and faculty data was gathered from seven institutions located within the stated regions. Participating institutions represented urban, suburban, and rural settings. With that cross-section, diverse views and attitudes were captured, including multiple socioeconomic realities.

Enrollment information for the spring 2017 semester was not publicly available for review. However, SUNY reported at the end of the 2015-2016 academic year that the enrollment of students identified as underrepresented minorities (URM) was consistent with information from previous years. Also, each targeted institution did not publicly report their current enrollment data for the spring 2017 semester on their website (SUNY, n.d.-b). There were inconsistencies across SUNY institutions related to updated enrollment information. Some SUNY institutions produced information ranging from spring 2015 to Fall 2016. As a result, the total number of Black male community college students and an accurate number of possible study participants was not available.

**Research Participants**

The study participants included Black male students; and faculty from math and English disciplines at seven SUNY community colleges throughout Central and Western
(including Finger Lakes) Regions in New York State. Creswell (2016) stated an appropriate number of study participants in a phenomenological qualitative study should range from three to 15. Of the 300 e-mails that were sent to faculty via Qualtrics, 44 faculty responded to the questionnaire; and nine one-on-one interviews were conducted with student participants. Participating faculty were asked to provide demographic information that would not identify them by name or institution. The demographic information that was solicited from faculty included: rank as a faculty member (adjunct, instructor, associate professor, or professor), locale of their institution (rural, urban, suburban), and years of tenure with their respective institutions.

**Recruitment process.** Creswell (2016) identified snowball sampling as a recruitment strategy to find study participants who were impacted by a phenomenon discussed within a research study. As such, Black male students were recruited from community colleges throughout the Central and Western New York Regions (including Finger Lakes) using snowball sampling. Students were recruited to participate using flyers with a description of the study and the researcher’s contact information (Appendix A) which were placed around each campus in high student trafficked areas (campus student center, near support programs, near the bookstore and near cafeteria). Word-of-mouth and student referrals were also encouraged. The flyer informed students that they would have a chance to win one of five $20 Visa or MasterCard gift cards. Student participants who sought to participate in the drawing were assured their identity would remain confidential, and that by providing contact information, it would only be used to deliver the gift card should they be selected. A random drawing was held at the
conclusion of student interviews for those who agreed to participate in the drawing. The drawing was conducted by someone unrelated to this study to ensure no favoritism.

Black male students were be recruited based on the following criteria:

- Self-identify as Black/African American
- Enrolled in a degree-seeking program at a SUNY community college
- Enrolled in at least their second semester
- At least 18 years of age

Each Black male study participants received a number related to their interview order. For example, BMS #1 was the first interview conducted while BMS #7 was the seventh student interview participant. Attributing a student’s interview number position allowed for students from different institutions to be identified uniformly. Students who contacted the researcher were asked to identify their preferred method of communication. For students who missed their scheduled interview, they were connected via e-mail and/or text message to identify a new potential interview date. There were four student participants who missed their initial interview date and broke off conversations leading up to rescheduling their interview.

Researcher bias has been identified as one way to potentially affect the validity of a study. Historically, research bias increased in instances where the researchers chose to focus on findings that supported their personal opinions and impacted the interpretation of the data instead of reporting a global view of the information (Johnson, 1997). For this study, bracketing, using a reflective journal helped combat researcher bias. Bracketing is an essential component of qualitative research within the framework established by philosopher Edmund Husserl (1931). Bracketing advanced the practice of suspending
personal thoughts and feelings about the research process (Husserl, 1931). The researcher worked closely and regularly with the targeted population in professional and volunteer settings and did not anticipate problems identifying the requisite number of student participants.

Beech (1999) defined bracketing as a required methodological principle that demands holding all preconceptions to allow the data to guide the researcher. After completing each one-on-one interview, the researcher wrote down his thoughts, ideas, and insight from the interview to capture tone, emphasis, and additional information that may not have otherwise been captured. Name or likeness of each individual participant were not connected to the journal entries and, as a result, the participants’ identities remained confidential.

Another measure used to minimize research bias was reflexivity. Reflexivity describes a process that allows qualitative researchers to express their personal thoughts and ideas about their study (Creswell, 2016; Johnson, 1997). For this study, using reflective writing provided an opportunity to enhance self-awareness and limit input and bias of the researcher. Reflexivity provided opportunities for the researcher to chronicle experiences throughout the process of gathering and analyzing collected data. Wall et al. (2004) explained that a reflective journal can impact the analysis process by helping researchers suspend their personal ideas and opinions. The reflective writing process played a part during the pre-analysis phase, analysis phase, and after the analysis phase. At the pre-analysis phase, the researcher was able to reflect on the thoughts he had regarding each interview. During the analysis phase, the process of self-awareness and self-reflection was held in check as the researcher was able to write about his experiences
conducting this study. The reflexive journal, during the post analysis process, helped to identify the issues not captured in Chapter 4, but which were relevant to creating recommendations in Chapter 5.

Creswell (2015) identified purposeful sampling as a method used to identify specific groups that could provide information related to the central theme of the study. Utilizing a purposeful sampling, faculty members from the Mathematics Department and Basic Communication/English Department at the seven targeted SUNY community colleges were selected to participate. Achieving the Dream identified Introductory Math and English courses as gateway courses that impacted student persistence (Achieving the Dream, n.d.-b.). SUNY programs of study listed Mathematics and Basic Communication as general-education requirements for graduation for all students (SUNY, n.d.). Students who do not successfully pass the required amount of general-education requirements cannot graduate.

SUNY community colleges publish faculty contact information on the colleges’ public websites. The researcher gathered available e-mail addresses for targeted math and English faculty by institution and loaded them into an Excel spreadsheet. Once all available public e-mail addresses for faculty were collected, each faculty e-mail was confirmed for accuracy. Those e-mail addresses were then loaded into Qualtrics. Faculty at SUNY community colleges in Central and Western New York regions then received a letter of invitation via e-mail to participate in the study (Appendix B). The invitations were date sensitive, and participants’ identities were not requested or captured. Therefore, faculty participants remained anonymous, and personal information was not included in the data collection process.
Instruments Used in Data Collection

Two separate instruments were used in this study to collect data. Each instrument was selected to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was not comprised. Instruments used for data collection were an anonymous questionnaire for faculty; and semi-structured, one-on-one interviews for the students.

Faculty data-collection tool. The use of a questionnaire represented an anonymous and confidential opportunity to gather information related to the idea of preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty toward Black male students. Once faculty reviewed the e-mail containing the letter invite, a link to the questionnaire was also included. After consent was granted, the anonymous questionnaire asked faculty to provide general demographic information: (a) institution enrollment size, (b) setting, (c) race/ethnicity of the college faculty member, (d) age range, (e) gender, and (f) faculty status. It is important to note that the questionnaire could not be completed without granting informed consent.

The questionnaire used a Likert scale with some short-answer questions (Appendix C). McDonald (2016) explained that Likert scales are widely recognized for their ability to gather information from respondents relating to individual attitudes and behaviors. A Likert scale displays a collection of statements that allows respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement (McDonald, 2016). For this study, a Likert scale required faculty respondents to answer a series of statements using a group of predetermined options.

Qualtrics provided safeguards that protected against respondent misuse relating to unauthorized dissemination and access to the questionnaire. To protect against anyone
other than identified faculty members assessing the questionnaire, Qualtric’s survey protection feature was enabled. Enabling survey protection meant that the questionnaire was accessible by invitation only, faculty participants could not complete the questionnaire more than once, and the questionnaire was tagged, which means it was prevented from being recognized/detected by search engines. Also, faculty participants could not forward or share this study’s questionnaire with others as a result of restricted access. This information was stated in the opening section, Block 1, of the questionnaire as a reminder to each faculty member.

Student data-collection tool. Semi-structured interviews are used as an effective method for qualitative researchers to gather information from participants experiencing a similar phenomenon (Allen, 2016; Creswell, 2016). For this study, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with Black male community college student participants presented opportunities for them to answer questions (Appendix D) and discuss their lived experiences. Questions generated for the one-on-one interviews were surveyed for validity by peer experts and community college staff and administrators who work closely with Black male community college students. Students who inquired about the study and had questions were provided with an e-mail explaining an overview (Appendix E).

Before conducting any one-on-one, semi-structured interviews for this study, the researcher participated in interview preparation with other qualitative researchers. This preparation provided practice for conducting effective interviewing techniques, and each researcher shared insights about how to conduct one-on-one interviews effectively. Through information gathered, interview questions and the flyer promoting the study
were analyzed by the community college staff and administrators. These member checks provided another level of accuracy and integrity to the data collection and student participation.

Each semi-structured interview was recorded using an electronic recording device that produced an audio recording. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher for quality assurance for the nine student participants. The transcription process entailed hours of listening to each of the nine interviews for clarity, meaning, and authentication. In addition to gaining preparation to develop effective interview techniques, the researcher had discussions with other qualitative researchers about the value of personally transcribing interviews. Based on the feedback and insight received, the process of transcribing all interviews allowed the researcher to spend hours listening to each interview and to immerse himself in the process of data authentication and accuracy. Students who elected to review the transcript for accuracy did not supply any changes or revisions.

**Data Analysis**

After completing the transcription process for student participants, the coding process began. The process of initial coding was used for first-level coding of faculty and student data. Saldana (2016) explained initial/open coding as a first step to deconstructing qualitative data by breaking it into smaller units to develop themes. Once initial themes were created, the data was ready for the next step in the data analysis process. Following initial/open coding, separate coding processes were used for each group of data gathered.
For second-level coding, values coding was applied to make meaning of student data as a level two coding process, while descriptive coding was applied to identifying further meaning of faculty data. Axial coding was applied to both populations during the third-level data analysis process. In vivo coding was also used as a level four coding to ensure the thoughts of study participants were presented in the results before the process of triangulation was used to compare faculty and student data related to ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty.

**Initial/open coding.** For this study, initial or open coding was applied to the first round of coding with faculty and student data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that initial coding, as an introductory level coding method, allows qualitative researchers to pull apart data and break it down into smaller units for a more thorough analysis. Saldana (2016) explained that initial coding provides an open-ended coding approach that allows for the creation of categories/themes during the initial phase of coding.

After the process of initial coding was completed, initial codes/categories/rudimentary themes were grouped and analyzed. The faculty data was analyzed by descriptive coding while the student data was analyzed by values coding.

**Descriptive coding.** Saldana (2016) stated that descriptive coding is a process that allows researchers to summarize a portion of qualitative data. For this study, descriptive coding provided opportunities for the researcher to categorize and summarize themes derived from faculty responses. Questionnaire statements were deconstructed and focused on key areas related to the preconceived attitudes and behaviors that Black male community college students may face. Also, each question in the questionnaire was linked to Schlossberg’s transition theory including the 4S model (situation, self, support,
and strategies) and one of the three research questions. As a result, categorizing responses from faculty participants was aligned with the theoretical frame of the study.

**Values coding.** Gable and Wolf (1993) stated that values coding is a useful data analysis tool for qualitative research studies that utilize semi-structured interviews because interviews provide opportunities to gather information about a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs. Given the diversity among the group of student participants, this style of coding was useful in understanding and interpreting information gathered from individual Black male community college student participants.

Even though values, attitudes, and beliefs have different meanings, each concept fit neatly under the umbrella of values coding. Daiute (2014) explained value as the significance we give to ourselves, other people, and other things. Saldana (1995) defined attitude as how we think and what we feel about ourselves, things, and the people around us. A belief is understood as a part of a system that includes our personal values and attitudes in addition to personal experiences, opinions, and perceptions of the world around us (Saldana, 2016).

**Axial coding.** Axial coding was employed as the third-level coding process used for both groups of participants. As a third-level coding process, Saldana (2016) stated that axial coding extends work started by the process of initial coding. Further, axial coding is used to purposely reconnect the data that is pulled apart during earlier coding processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this study, axial coding refined and finalized analysis processing that was started in earlier coding stages (open, values, descriptive, and axial).
A major goal of axial coding is to reach saturation (Saldana, 2016). Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined saturation as the process of analysis where no new properties, perspectives, or conditions are discovered. The process of coding at this level is calculated to ensure categories and subcategories are aligned properly. Although each student represented had unique personal experiences, commonalities existed, thus making axial coding an effective instrument of analysis and reflection.

**In vivo coding.** In vivo coding was employed as the fourth and final level coding process used for both groups of participants and final coding process for this study. In vivo coding is identified as a valuable coding method for research studies including marginalized groups, because in vivo coding prefers to use the words of study participants to increase understanding of the world through their perspective (Saldana, 2016). Another benefit of in vivo coding was the ability to keep track of codes generated by participant responses instead of those created by researchers (Charmaz, 2014; Saldana, 2016). For this study, in vivo coding provided opportunities to share thoughts of the faculty and student participants to answer research questions 2 and 3.

**Triangulation.** Denzin (1970) posited that there were four types of triangulation: data, investigator, methodological, and theory triangulation. For this study, data triangulation was the most appropriate form of triangulation due to the need to compare data gathered from faculty and student participants. Triangulation took place during the process of comparing faculty and student data, in an effort to highlight similarities and differences related to ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty toward Black male community college students.
Data triangulation provided two major strengths for use in this qualitative research. Analyzing data from multiple sources is a strength of triangulation (Denzin, 1970). For this study, information collected through both data collection processes, namely, student and faculty participants were triangulated. The second strength of data triangulation is that the data used for triangulation was not limited by when it was collected, where it was collected, or who provided the data (Denzin, 1970; Mitchell, 1986). Since this study analyzed data collected through two separate collection processes, the process of data triangulation was an effective way to compare and contrast faculty and student participant data.

Information gathered from faculty and student participants who answered the same three short answer questions related to research question 3 and eliminating preconceived attitudes and behaviors was analyzed similarly. Level one analysis for the faculty and student information was initial/open coding. Initial coding allowed data from both faculty and student participants to be broken down into smaller chunks for code development. Level two analysis for faculty information was descriptive coding and student information was values coding. Descriptive coding provided opportunities to describe from faculty’s perspective about ending preconceived notions. Values coding provided the ability to attribute attitudes, feelings, and beliefs to information gathered from student responses related to what they believed would end preconceived notions. Level three analysis was axial coding. Axial coding allowed for the information from both participant groups to be restricted back together to identify themes supported by both groups. Level four analysis was in vivo coding. In vivo coding allowed faculty and
student participants’ direct quotes to be used as proof of their thoughts related to this issue.

Confidentiality

This study provided participating faculty with a generic identifier that included an abbreviation for faculty member (FM) and a number that captured faculty participants (i.e., FM #1, FM #2, FM #3, etc.). The same process was applied to student participants. Black male student participants were also assigned a generic identifier that included an abbreviation for Black male student (BMS) and a number that represented each of them in the study (i.e., BMS #1, BMS #2, BMS #3, etc.).

Privacy and confidentiality concerns in qualitative research require researchers to take the necessary steps to keep the identity of the participants safe from being identified (Creswell, 2016; Grossoehme, 2014). For this study, those concerns required the researcher to ensure that study participants were not identifiable based on information they provided during the study’s data collection process. All information collected from this study is kept confidential, and stored on a separate flash drive that is locked in a secure place within the researcher’s home. Two years after this study is published, all files will be deleted in a secure fashion. All study participants will remain confidential and their identity will not be shared. To further exhibit an importance of maintaining study participants’ confidentiality, information in this study is reported in the aggregate. Also, the researcher successfully completed and obtained a Certificate of Completion for Protecting Human Research Participants Training Module (Appendix F) from the degree-granting institution. After all the program requirements were met, based on the guidelines set forth by St. John Fisher College, the completed study was made available
publicly through St. John Fisher College’s website for study participants as well as anyone else interested in this subject matter.

**Consent**

For this study, every faculty and student participant was required to give informed consent before participating. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) outlined a process that included providing an explanation of the research study, the role of the research participant, and their rights related to the research process. Before agreeing to participate, all research participants were made aware of the overall scope of the study and their role and rights as participants. For example, the letter accompanying access to the questionnaire explained how the anonymous information provided would remain confidential. Faculty received their invitation to participate through Qualtrics to ensure the highest level of confidentiality.

Each faculty member received an e-mail from Qualtrics that contained a letter that introduced the study and provided information about their role as participants. The e-mail contained a link to access the questionnaire. The explanation within the e-mail to each faculty participant explained this study’s consent process with assurance that the anonymous information provided would remain confidential. The opening section of the questionnaire, Block 1, reiterated the information about confidentiality and asked each faculty member to answer a question that asked specifically if they wanted to give consent to participate. Once each faculty member provided consent, access to the questionnaire was granted. Faculty who chose not to provide consent were not allowed to access the questionnaire and were then directed to exit the questionnaire.
Upon arriving at a mutually agreed upon interview location and answering any questions related to the interview, Black male student participants received an explanation of this study, their role as a potential study participant, and how the interview would proceed. Before the interview began, each student was read his rights as a participant from the consent form. After reading each student his rights as a study participant, those who agreed to move forward in the study signed two copies of the consent form, one of was retained by the student, and the other was retained by the researcher. In addition to giving their consent to participate, participants also gave their consent to have the interview recorded. One copy of the signed consent form was given to the study participant, and the other copy is retained by the researcher to verify that the student gave consent to participate.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity is explained as the process of ensuring the findings are truthful and/or reliable (Creswell, 2016; Guba, 1981). Types of validity used in qualitative research include member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Creswell, 2016). For this study, member checks, peer debriefing, and triangulation (discussed earlier in the chapter) were used to ensure validity.

Creswell (2016) explained member checks as a process that allows research participants to be used as additional members of the research team to provide a check of data collection results. For accuracy, Black male study participants were given the opportunity to verify the validity of the interview transcript from recorded interviews. Student participants who wanted to review the transcript of their interview received a copy and were asked to change and/or comment within 48 hours of receiving the e-mail.
Lincoln & Guba (1985) stated that the opportunity to discuss the information gathered with the research participants aides in maintaining objectivity against research bias.

Peer debriefing was another validity measure used to ensure the accuracy of the data collection process. Creswell (2016) explained peer debriefing as an opportunity to discuss one’s research with others who are familiar with the subject matter within the research study. For this study, peer debriefing provided opportunities for the researcher to discuss the data collection tool that was used for the student interviews. Peer debriefing for this study included discussions with six community college staff members and/or graduates who provided opportunities for the researcher to gain insight and perspective from peer experts. Both processes, member checking, and peer debriefing added to the trustworthiness of this study (Creswell, 2016; Guba, 1981).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided information about the research design as applied to the study in general and more specifically, to participants of the study. This qualitative phenomenological study provided opportunities to explore the attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty members and the lived experiences of Black male students. The use of an anonymous questionnaire provided a means to gather raw data from community college faculty members that, heretofore, has not been captured by researchers for Black male students at community colleges. Semi-structured interviews was the vehicle used to explore the lived experiences of SUNY community college Black male students. Gaining insight into preconceived attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty have toward Black male students is important to help colleges develop strategies to eradicate bias and improve the academic environment for all its students,
thereby increasing the likelihood of persistence and graduation rates for Black male community college students.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings for this study. Data gathered from the anonymous questionnaire completed by the faculty and semi-structured interviews was coded, and analyzed. From there, themes were generated that categorize similar thoughts and ideas. The information collected from the study participants was used to provide answers and insight related to the research questions of this study.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 3 presented the methodology that guided this study, which explored factors impacting the persistence of Black male students enrolled at SUNY community colleges and the perceived attitudes and behaviors of SUNY community college faculty members toward Black male students. A total of 300 e-mails were sent to SUNY community college faculty in Central and Western (including Finger Lakes) Regions of New York. Faculty were targeted based on their disciplines, specifically, math and English faculty from seven SUNY community colleges. Faculty contact information was gained through public access on SUNY community college websites, and they were asked to participate via Qualtrics, a web-based tool capable of administering questionnaires.

Approximately 15% of the targeted 300 community college faculty responded with 12% of the group completing the questionnaire in its entirety. Most respondents (95.45%) were between the ages of 21-64, and 86.36% of respondents self-identified as White or Caucasian. No faculty self-identified as Black/African American, and of the 44 respondents, three (6.82%) self-identified as Hispanic or Latin.

For student participants, snowball sampling was utilized to identify participants and data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The interviews included open-ended questions that allowed each student participant to speak about his individual experience as a SUNY community college student. During the interviews, each Black male student participant shared information about the factors that allowed him to persist
and continue to work toward positive academic achievement and degree completion. Student participants met individually with the researcher during the spring 2017 semester. Data gathered from nine Black male student participants represented students who were preparing to graduate, transfer to 4-year institutions to continue their studies, or continue their studies the following semester at their respective institutions.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?
2. What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of preconceived notions held by college faculty?
3. From the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated?

In addition to the research questions, Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, the 4S model, informed the study. The 4S model’s principles, which are: situation, self, support, and strategies served as the umbrella or unifying principle for themes that were generated from participant data. The creation of themes was developed using open, values, descriptive, and axial coding. In vivo coding was used to validate the creation of themes incorporating the words of faculty and student participants.

Initial/open coding was used as the first-level coding process for data analysis process of both student and faculty-generated data. The themes generated from the initial/open coding cycle were further analyzed through descriptive coding. The
descriptive coding cycle provided opportunities to synthesize data gathered from the faculty responses. Questionnaire statements were analyzed and focused on key areas related to preconceived attitudes and behaviors held toward Black male community college students. Axial coding was the last coding process used to finalize themes developed from the data analysis process of data gathered from faculty. Axial coding was incorporated into this study as a third-level coding process and used for both groups of participants (students and faculty) in the study. Axial coding provided reassurance that the categories and subcategories were aligned properly.

Similar to the first-level coding of faculty data, initial/open coding was also used for the first-level coding process for the student data. The codes and themes generated from the process of initial/open coding were further analyzed through the process of values coding. Values coding was an appropriate data analysis tool for this study due to its ability to present information based on the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the study participants. Axial coding was used to develop themes from the data analysis process. In vivo coding was the final coding process used. In vivo coding provided the opportunity to incorporate the direct thoughts and ideas of students who expressed information related to persisting at the community college level.

In vivo coding was also used to report findings for research question three which incorporated data triangulation. Faculty and student participants were asked to provide their thoughts and ideas related to eliminating preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty. In vivo coding provided opportunities to include the thoughts and ideas provided by faculty and student participants.
The purpose of Chapter 4 is to provide the findings from the data collected and present emergent themes. The information in this chapter details insight garnered from Black male community college student participants about strategies and personal accountability that will help them succeed at the community college level. In addition, this chapter introduces the preconceived attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors held by community college faculty toward Black male students, which is a unique aspect of this study compared to other studies about Black male community college students. Finally, the strategies for the eradication of preconceived attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of both faculty and Black male students toward one another will be highlighted.

**Findings**

For this section, the results are presented by research question, the type of coding method used, and by the analysis of each. Also included in this section is the relationship of Schlossberg’s (2011) 4S model to the results.

**Research Question 1.** The first question for this study was directed at faculty and asks: What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?

**Schlossberg’s 4S model.** Self and situation are two of the four principles that are related to answering the question of faculty perceptions toward Black male community college students. Self, in Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, is defined as one’s ability to deal with situations (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). An individual’s personal characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexuality, and socioeconomic status) are believed to support the process of developing a greater sense of self (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011).
Situation was defined as particular incidents or events that an individual experiences (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011).

**Coding method.** Initial coding, descriptive coding, and axial coding were the three coding and analysis methods used for this question. These coding processes helped dissect the data into smaller pieces, pull the data apart to attach and identify themes, reassign more descriptive codes into themes that accurately expressed a global perspective.

**Findings.** Based on responses provided by faculty through the questionnaire, it was determined that faculty believed Black male community college students: (a) have equal academic abilities, (b) are supported by their institution, (c) are impacted by negative stereotypes, (d) have experienced historical underachievement, and (e) would benefit from positive faculty support.

**Black males possess equal academic abilities.** Based on responses by faculty, they indicated that they believed Black male students had equal academic abilities as other students. Question 12 asked faculty if they viewed Black male students as capable of becoming scholars, and 35 of 36 faculty responses (97.22%) agreed and strongly agreed. The remaining faculty member (2.78%) was neutral. Question 18 asked faculty if they believed Black male students’ academic capabilities improved when these students participated in unbiased learning environments with effective academic supports. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 33 (91.67%) indicated probably or definitely yes, that they believed Black male academic capabilities improved in unbiased learning environments, which included effective academic support. The remaining three faculty responses (8.33%) indicated students’ abilities may or may not improve in unbiased environments.
Question 21 asked faculty if they agreed or disagreed that compared to other students in their class, Black male students possessed equal academic capabilities. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 31 (86.11%) indicated that they somewhat to strongly agreed that Black male students possess equal academic capabilities to that of their collegiate peers. Four of the remaining five participants (11.11%) were neutral, and the remaining faculty member (2.78%) disagreed, which indicated a belief that Black male students did not possess equal academic capabilities. Question 23 asked each faculty member to compare Black male students to other students in their class and share if they thought Black male students were equally as hard working. A total of 30 of the 35 faculty respondents (85.71%) indicated that they agreed and strongly agreed that Black male students were equally as hardworking as other students in their class. Four of the remaining five faculty (11.43%) were neutral, and one faculty member (2.78%) disagreed, which indicated a belief that Black male students were not as hard working as other students.

Institutional support for Black male students. Responses generated from questions 9, 10, 11, and 15 of the anonymous questionnaire indicated that community college faculty believed their institution provided positive support for Black male students. For question 9, which asked faculty if they personally believed their institution did a good job providing programming to promote and support the needs of Black male students, 24 out of 36 of the faculty (66.67%) respondents indicated that they somewhat to strongly agreed that their institution supported and promoted the needs of Black male students, while nine (25%) were neutral. The remaining three faculty, or 8.33%, and believed their institution did not do a good job providing programming for Black male students. Question 10 asked faculty if they believed their institution provided a
welcoming environment for Black males to be successful. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 26 (72.23%) responded that they somewhat to strongly agreed that their institution provided a welcoming environment for Black male students. Six faculty were neutral (16.67%), and the remaining four faculty (11.12%) somewhat to strongly disagreed that their institution did not provide a welcoming environment to Black male community college students.

Question 11 required faculty to identify programs on campus that supported positive academic achievement of Black male students. Of the 35, 23 (63.89%) faculty respondents indicated that they could identify campus programs, while 13 faculty members (36.11%) said they could not. Question 15 also illustrated faculty awareness regarding available financial support on campus to meet the needs of Black male students. This question asked faculty if they were aware of at least one scholarship at their institution for Black male students. Of the 36 respondents, 11 (30.56%) indicated they were aware of a scholarship identified for Black male students, while 25 faculty respondents (69.44%) were not aware of a scholarship available at their institution exclusively for Black male students.

**Impact of negative stereotypes for Black male students.** Results from Questions 7, 26, and 27 indicated that community college faculty recognized the impact negative stereotypes have on the persistence and positive academic achievement of Black male community college students. Question 7 asked the faculty to express how much they believed racism impacted how Black male students were viewed on campus. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 30 (83.33%) somewhat to strongly agreed that racism affected how Black male students were viewed on campus. Of the remaining six respondents, four
faculty (11.11%) were neutral, while two faculty members, somewhat disagreed (2.78%) and disagreed (2.78%) that racism affected how Black males were viewed on campus. Question 26 asked faculty to compare Black male students to other students in their class to determine if faculty viewed Black male students as intimidating. Thirty-one faculty (91.43%), indicated that they did not view Black male students as intimidating compared to other students. Three faculty members (8.57%) were neutral and neither agreed or disagreed that they viewed Black male students as intimidating compared to other students. Question 27 asked faculty if Black male students exhibited behaviors that indicated that they did not care about their education. Of the 36 faculty respondents, eight (22.23%) somewhat to strongly agreed that Black male students exhibited behaviors that would indicate they did not care about their education. Nine (25.00%) were neutral, and the remaining 19 faculty (52.78%) somewhat to strongly disagreed that Black male students exhibited behaviors that indicated they did not care about their education.

_Historical underachievement of Black male community college students._ In addition to the impact of negative stereotypes, institutional support, and a belief that Black male students have equal academic capabilities, faculty responses to questions 8, 28, 29, and 30 of the faculty questionnaire generated another theme which indicated faculty members are aware of the historically low academic achievement of Black male community college students as evidenced by low graduation rates. Question 8 asked faculty to acknowledge their level of awareness related to historically low graduation rates for Black male students in higher education. Thirty-five faculty (97.22%) somewhat to strongly agreed that they were personally aware of Black male students’ low degree attainment. The remaining faculty’s response (2.78%) was neutral.
Questions 28 and 29 were another set of comparison questions for faculty about Black males in comparison to other students. Question 28 asked faculty, compared to other student populations, if they thought Black male students were reluctant to seek help. Eighteen faculty respondents (50%) said that they somewhat to strongly agreed that they thought Black males were unwilling to ask for help. Six faculty respondents (16.67%) were neutral, and 12 (33.34%) faculty respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed that Black male students were reluctant to ask for help. Question 29 asked faculty if they believed Black male students were academically unprepared to be successful in college. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 17 (47.22%) somewhat to strongly agreed that Black male students were academically unprepared to succeed in college. Eight (22.22%) respondents were neutral, while 11 (30.56%) faculty respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed that Black male students were academically unprepared to succeed in college.

Question 30 asked faculty if they knew other faculty members at their respective institution who demonstrated negative attitudes and behaviors toward Black male students that hindered positive academic achievement of Black male students by assigning them lower grades. Thirty-two (91.43%) respondents said no, they did not know of any faculty member at their institution who assigned lower grades to Black male students. Three (8.57%) remaining faculty respondents answered yes, which indicated that they knew of at least one faculty member at their institution who demonstrated negative attitudes and behaviors toward Black male students that included assigning lower grades.
**Positive faculty support.** Faculty responses from questions 16, 22, 24, and 25 identified and described the positive impact faculty believed they could have on Black male community college students. Question 16 asked faculty if they felt they could assist Black male community college students with improving students’ self-esteem by embracing their culture and displaying an awareness of issues within the students’ communities. Of the 36 faculty respondents, 33 (91.67%) somewhat to strongly agreed that they possessed an ability to help. Three (8.33%) faculty responses were neutral.

Questions 22, 24, and 25 were additional comparison questions. Question 22 asked faculty if faculty treated Black male students with the same amount of respect and dignity as other students. Thirty five (97.22%) faculty agreed or strongly agreed that they treated Black male community college students with an equal amount of respect and dignity while one (2.78%) faculty respondent was neutral. Question 24 compared Black male community college students and White/Caucasian male community college students and asked faculty if they thought Black males were equally as honest and trustworthy. Thirty four (94.44%) respondents somewhat to strongly agreed Black male community college students were equally as honest as their white counterparts. One (2.78%) respondent was neutral and one (2.78%) respondent believed Black male community college students were not as honest and trustworthy as White/Caucasian male community college students. Finally, question 25 asked faculty if they had started the same amount of interactions with Black male community college students as with other groups of students. Thirty (83.33%) faculty agreed their interactions were equal among all students. Five (13.89%) faculty members were neutral; and one (2.78%) respondent
described his/her interactions outside of class with Black male students as being less than
equal compared to other groups of students.

**Research question 2.** The second question for this study was directed at student
participants and asked: What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ
in order to persist in spite of preconceived notions held by college faculty?

**Schlossberg’s 4S model.** Strategies, principle four in the 4S model, was the main
principle that informed the answers relative to strategies Black male students use to
persist. Strategies were defined as tools used to navigate transitions (Evans et al., 2009;
Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Student participants were asked questions
during their interview about the strategies they employ that ensure their success. Even
though every student’s journey was different, commonalities surfaced during the coding
process.

**Coding method.** Initial coding, values coding, axial coding, and in vivo coding
were the four coding and analysis methods used for research question 2. Initial coding
was used for first-cycle coding to break the data into smaller units. From there, values
coding supplied additional meaning and value to the codes, and themes developed. The
third level of the analysis included axial coding, which realigned the fractured data and
bridged it together under a commonly shared view. In vivo coding was the fourth and
final level of analysis incorporated. In vivo coding provided opportunities to include
direct quotes from student participants in support of themes created using axial coding.

**Findings.** Based on responses provided by student participants during their
interview, followed by the coding and analysis processes, it was determined that students
used the following strategies to persist and combat perceptions of preconceived attitudes
and behaviors held by faculty: (a) time management, (b) ask for help when needed, and (c) get involved on campus and network.

Black male student participants discussed tools, tips, and resources they used to be successful as community college students. Emergent themes, highlighted in the pages that follow assists Black male students create a positive environment that fosters academic achievement and helps them persist toward degree completion.

*Time management.* Time management was identified as one factor that student participants used to be successful. BMS #1 stated “making a schedule for myself for when I had to do certain things, to make sure I was on time for everything, to make sure I had time for everything” [helps ensure success] (BMS #1, 2017, p. 6). BMS #2 shared a similar message:

> Time management. Um, time management is a big thing. I can tell you first hand, time waits for nobody. So, if you miss out, then you missin’ out, and time will keep going, and you won’t be able to catch up. (BMS #2, 2017, p. 5)

BMS #5 also spoke about time management, its value, and how it allowed him to persist as a community college student:

> Time management. Time management, I felt, was the best thing I learned. Just coming to college, you have five classes, and every professor thinks they’re your only professor. So, all of the work needs to be done and you, you have to learn how to manage your time and prioritize your tasks. (BMS #5, 2017, p. 7)

Black male student participants expressed how important time management and identified it as one factor contributing to their success.
Ask for help when needed. Black male student participants expressed how important asking for help impacted their success. BMS #5 said “we need to learn how to ask for help. That’s one thing I feel in my life personally is big” (BMS #5, 2017, p. 9). He went on to say, “as far as being someone who is trying to graduate community college, a big thing that we should do as a people, as young Black males, is reach for help . . . look for help” (BMS #5, 2017, p. 10).

Another student, BMS #4, shared a similar message about seeking help and why it is important for other Black male students consider seeking help:

I would say, go to…to get help. Cause, like, if you don’t know what you doing, you as well, just like . . . go to…and get help. Instead of just sitting and not knowing what ya doing, and going to class next day looking stupid. (BMS #4, 2017, p. 3)

BMS #3 was another student who shared insight into asking for help when clarity or a student’s understanding was unclear. BMS #3 explained, “you also need to reach out to your teachers if you’re confused or if you need any other help” (BMS #3, 2017, p. 4). BMS #9 said reaching out for help can increase Black male students’ chances of getting needed help:

If someone need help with something, they should reach [out] to the person that gives help to them. So basically, you have to talk to somebody about it, like, somebody that you know that could help connect to the person that would help you. Um, so, cause, if you don’t know where to go exactly, they could lead you to the main person that knows about it. (BMS #9, 2017, pp. 7-8)
Get involved on campus and network. Black male student participants believed that getting involved on campus and networking with other members of their college community aided to their ability to progress in all arenas of college life, including academic achievement and persistence toward graduation. BMS #1 expressed why getting involved on campus was important and its positive benefit:

Getting involved on campus helped me, like, realize a lot of the different offices up here that could help me. Um, getting involved also helped me feel like I was here for more than just one thing. I’m here for multiple things, and it feels like [I’m] more fulfilled. (BMS #1, 2017, p. 6)

BMS #2 explained how important it is to have multiple available resources at his institution. BMS #2 said, “I’ve tried to get to know a lot of people on campus so that I don’t have to go to one person, just, if that one person is not available, I can go to someone else” (BMS #2, 2017, p. 5). BMS #3 expressed his belief in getting involved on campus and its positive impact related to his academic achievement:

First of all, I have connections. So, basically, that’s one of my strategies - just be able, [to] be around the right people who know the stuff and then basically, I go from there. And then those people, they’re the ones, you know, who direct me, you know, to services that can help me. (BMS #3, 2017, p. 5)

BMS #5 discovered what networking could do to increase his chances of being successful:

I wanted to make sure I networked. So, I networked. So, now if I need [anything], I know who are the good students are in my history class, so, if I am struggling studying for a history exam, I know who I can go to. Things like that
just, being able to network and utilizing the different resources that I’ve been able to acquire, I felt was key and it worked. (BMS #5, 2017, p. 8)

Black male students shared their insight and positive experiences related to their ability to get involved on campus and network with other members of their respective campus community.

**Research question 3.** The last research question for this study explored putting an end to preconceived attitudes and behaviors about Black male students. Faculty and student participants were asked three similar open-ended questions relative to ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors. The third research question asked: from the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated? The question was addressed by information gathered from both faculty and student data.

Faculty and Black male student participants expressed their beliefs related to ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed at Black male community college students. Through data triangulation, both groups believed community colleges, faculty members, and Black male students each needed to actively contribute to creating change. As a result, there were similarities and differences expressed by both groups to end preconceived attitudes and behaviors, and the perception Black male students hold toward faculty, whether real or imagined.

**Schlossberg’s 4S model.** Based on responses from faculty and student participants, three out of the four principles of Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory were evident. Situation, support, and strategies were factors related to answering what
could be done to put an end to preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty directed at Black male students.

**Coding.** Since both groups of data went through separate coding processes, the process of triangulation was utilized in response to Research Question three. Triangulation in this instance sought to discover commonalities between data sets.

The data analysis process entailed reviewing the data of all participants; revisiting and adjusting codes, and refining groups of codes. The process of realigning themes involved a multi-coding approach, similar to the analysis of the first two research questions. Student data was coded using values coding and faculty data was coded using descriptive coding, the process of triangulation connected efforts done on both sides with additional analysis using axial coding and in vivo coding. In vivo coding highlighted the perspective of students using their words to describe strategies that help them persist and succeed academically. In vivo coding also provided opportunities to articulate faculty suggestions on ways to eliminate preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed toward at Black male students.

**Findings.** Based on responses provided by faculty and student participants, triangulated data revealed that they agreed and disagreed on certain issues. Both participant groups agreed that the following measures would help put an end to preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty: (a) Black male students must take their education seriously, (b) Black male students must ask for help, (c) community colleges need greater faculty diversity, and (d) faculty need to participate more in conversations and discussions to understand the needs of Black male students. Faculty
and students differed in their opinion regarding an institution’s role and its need to establish a positive sense of belonging for Black male students.

**Similarities.** Through the process of analyzing participant data, faculty and student participants shared similar ideas relating to ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed at Black male students. Faculty and Black male student study participants believed Black male students needed to take their education seriously, institutions needed greater diversity among faculty, and faculty needed more understanding to gain more information about Black male students and their needs.

**Take education seriously.** Faculty and Black male students identified that Black male students taking their education seriously was one way to end preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed toward Black male students. One faculty member stated, “take schoolwork seriously. Don’t be afraid to seek help when you need it. There’s no shame in asking for help” (FM #1, 2017, p. 13). BMS #1 believed the success of Black male students would improve significantly if students would simply “take it seriously” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 7). BMS #1 provided his explanation about what “take it seriously” would look like on a daily basis.

Going to class, paying attention, taking notes, doing your homework. Um, even if you don’t necessarily get involved with campus on a daily basis, but, like a club or a student government, it’s just going to an event or two here or there. Um, asking around, just walking around the campus, even if you have nothing to do, walk into different offices and see what they do. Um, go to career services, at least try, like once a month, um, to work on your resume or whatever, and see if
there are, like, internships or whatever on campus that you can get involved with.

(BMS #1, 2017, p. 10)

Another student participant shared a similar sentiment in his illustration of what it would look like if Black male students took their education seriously. BMS #4 explained, “They could start to go to class more, do their work more and start to focus more” (BMS #4, 2017, p. 4). A faculty member provided a similar suggestion that would encourage the Black male students to, “ask questions, go to office hours, be engaged with the material and with the faculty. Be disciplined and diligent to complete all course requirements and recommendations” (FM #14, 2017, p. 1). FM #11 provided encouragement for Black male students and acknowledged the perceptions impacting people of color and the need to work hard.

We minorities need to work twice as hard to ensure that we are given the respect and dignity we deserve. It is a reality that the majority will assume we are in positions of success because such success was given to us – not earned. It is our responsibility to prove to ourselves and others that we have earned everything we have in this life and will continue to be successful despite adversity. (FM #11, 2017, p. 1)

When this question was presented to BMS #6, he released a deep sigh before he said, “I would say focus more in classes and not on the outside, outside, ah, distractions” (BMS #6, 2017, p. 6).

Ask for help. Asking for help was another important factor expressed by faculty and student participants to help end preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed at Black male students. Asking for help was identified as one strategy used by Black male
student participants that increased their success and supported their persistence toward positive academic achievement outcomes and graduation. BMS #7 described the importance of asking for help by sharing a piece of his personal journey:

   Ask for help, because nobody’s gonna know what you’re going through if you don’t ask for help or if you don’t tell people what you’re going through, ’cause I used to be like that too. I didn’t tell people how – what I was going through. and I almost failed all my classes. but then I started seeking for help. and that changed a lot. (BMS #7, 2017, p. 10)

   FM #2 stated: “ask questions in class, turn work in on time, and stop by during office hours” (FM #2, 2017, p. 1). FM #19 said: “don’t let the noise around you take away your dreams. Ask for help; never be too proud to ask for assistance. We all need help at one time or another” (FM #19, 2017, p. 1). FM #22 shared the following: “I would say that they have to reach out to faculty and not be afraid to ask questions” (FM #22, 2017, p. 1). FM #24 said, “Come ask for help in office hours when you need it” (FM #24, 2017, p. 1).

   More employee diversity. Faculty and student participants shared ideas related to institutions needing to hire a more diverse group of faculty. BMS #1 explained: “I think that if, if faculty was a little more diverse, then that could help end it because the faculty itself, would be able to understand the situations that Black males are coming from” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 9). BMS #5 explained how he’s been impacted by a lack of employee diversity at his institution and his struggle to find Black male mentors who had a similar background to Black male students.
Another thing that, ah, it’s an issue that I’m trying to address; it’s so hard, but we need mentors that look like us. That know our problems, that know what we’ve been through, and it’s so hard to get mentors that look like us because mentors that look like us have, you know, other stuff to do and it’s just, it’s a number’s game. (BMS #5, 2017, p. 10)

Faculty members also recognized a need for more employee/faculty diversity on campus. FM #6 mentioned, “my institution needs to hire more Black men” (FM #6, 2017, p. 1). FM #8 stated, “hiring more Black faculty would help” (FM #8, 2017, p. 1). FM #24 said, “more Black faculty is one piece that is needed” (FM #24, 2017, p. 1).

**Dialogue and conversations.** In addition to encouraging Black male students to ask for help and recommendations to hire more Black college employees/faculty, faculty and student participants expressed faculty engaging in more discussions and conversations about supporting Black male students. The suggestion of joint discussions were expected to help faculty better understand Black male students as individuals and not as one large homogenous group represented by poor decisions of a few. BMS #1 explained that faculty needed to be “more understanding [and] understand the situations that Black males are coming from” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 10). FM #12 believed it was important for faculty to “get to know their Black male students” (FM #12, 2017, p. 1). BMS #6 suggested that faculty undertake the process of doing some fact finding related to Black male students through conversations.

Conversation. Just ask students what they really need and what they [are] dealing [with in] their life, maybe to see what is actually going on with their lives [and]
why they acting a certain way, and maybe why they showing up late, late to class, maybe why they not doing their work. (BMS #6, 2017, p. 10)

BMS #3 expressed the need for faculty to be attentive and listen.

Faculty need to take time, you know, to listen, you know, to some students who really, you know, . . . our voices. You know, they really need to know what’s going on emotionally, spiritually. Like, yeah, they just need to listen to what’s going on. (BMS #3, 2017, p. 8)

FM #8 said faculty need to, “make greater effort to learn more about students’ lives and know students on a more personal level” (FM #8, 2017, p. 1).

Differences. Two major differences regarding what faculty and Black male students thought was needed to end preconceived notions were the role of the institution and creating a sense of belonging for Black male students.

Role of the institution. Student participants had differing views about what institutions could do to help end preconceived attitudes and behaviors toward Black male students. BMS #1 explained:

I think the institution needs to, like I said, try to become more diverse, more, um, continue to do like, the conversation circles that are done on campus. Those can [help] some, those can help definitely make even the peers of Black students see them under different lights. (BMS #1, 2017, p. 9)

BMS #8 shared a different opinion. “The institution shouldn’t have to do anything else.” Only one of the Black male student participants suggested training of some sort for faculty. “One area of addressing [stuff], just more sensitivity training for the faculty
chairs. That way, they can get the other professors not in line - in line” BMS #5 explained.

Faculty, on the other hand, expressed more of an understanding of potential opportunities available for institutions to offer more professional development (PD) and training. FM #9 shared: “professional development should be provided to allow for a safe space where preconceived notions can be outwardly admitted to and discussed among peers” (FM #9, 2017, p. 1). FM #4 suggested their institution, “provide PD opportunities to learn more about urban Black culture and the roles of Black males within that culture” (FM #4, 2017, p. 1). FM #13 explained why targeted professional development could help faculty as they work with Black male students.

Social-justice-focused professional development that is mandatory (often a dirty word) is a must, and they need to be held accountable for disproportionality in their grading systems, reluctance to hold a Black student accountable for subpar work, and actually follow up and work with the student, and to identify the role of student success as part of their job descriptions. They also need to attend workshops on microaggressions.

FM #10 recommended their institution, “provide some workshops sharing background and cultural insights into the culture of African Americans, so the faculty’s understanding of their students’ culture and experiences is improved” (FM #10, 2017, p. 1).

A number of faculty participants stated treating all students fairly would help end preconceived notions. FM #1, 3, 5, and 7 expressed nearly identical answers. Each faculty member stated treating all students fairly would end preconceived attitudes and
behaviors toward Black male students. Black male students focused their responses solely on their individual needs which did not expand to other students. For example, BMS #7 explained:

> Instead of just believing what they see or what they hearing, they should, like, have the full knowledge of what is really going on, on that situation or topic, you know. So, they should understand the background first instead of just judging or stereotyping what they, you know, hear or see about a certain – certain group of people. (BMS #7, 2017, p. 8)

Black male students, on the other hand, believed faculty needed to support them in developing a sense of belonging where students receive equitable supports.

*Sense of belonging.* Student participants wanted to be recognized by faculty as individuals who deserved the same level of attention and support provided to other students. BMS #2 said:

> I know, like Black students sometimes, Black male students, we feel, like, we’re not recognized on campus. We’re just people that just walk around, don’t go to class, but there are some of us who do go to class, who wanna do, achieve, and do better and graduate. So if we get recognized, that’s that and like, we, we can encourage other people to, ah, do the same thing. (BMS #2, 2017, p. 6)

BMS #4 shared the need for faculty to help Black male students feel like they belong and are supported. BMS #4 shared: “I say encourage them more, and give them more motivation. Like, at least, like, talk to them sometimes when they look, like, down or need help and stuff. Make sure everything is good” (BMS #4, 2017, p. 4). BMS #6 explained it would help if more college employees: “included them in, ah, most activities.
I feel like Black students, Black students are, Black male students are missing in most of the things I see around campus” (BMS #6, 2017, p. 7). He expanded his point further:

If you include, maybe if you introduce new things that are very, ah, very interesting to Black kids, like maybe groups of music, maybe sports, maybe something like that or maybe rewarding students that do better, which also shows that other students that, they can actually do better and receive the same awards themselves. (BMS #6, 2017, pp. 7-8)

Black male students believed getting rewarded would also help their peers want to work harder because their work would not be ignored but would instead be celebrated.

**Student participant results.** Information collected from nine interviews conducted with Black male SUNY community college student participants provided data that fit each category in Schlossberg’s 4S model. Through the data analysis process which included initial/open, values, axial, and in vivo coding; data gathered from student participants was presented with the purpose of using direct quotes from the study participants to support themes that emerged. Findings are displayed in relation to components of the 4S model.

**Situation.** The first component of the 4S model focused on a particular incident or event each Black male student encountered. Each student was persisting toward graduation, and shared how their journey in higher education differed from one individual to the next.

**Findings.** Black male student participants supplied information that led to the creation of the following themes: (a) no two journeys are alike, (b) a plan is important for success, and (c) don’t waste the opportunity.
**Coding.** Initial/open, values, axial, and in vivo coding were used to analyze data gathered from student participants. Initial coding allowed for an introductory level analysis of data, which broke data into smaller pieces and allowed for rudimentary theme development. Values coding added value and meaning to initial themes, and continued the process of breaking data down into discernible themes. Axial coding analyzed synthesized codes and reassembled data into cogent themes. Finally, in vivo coding provided opportunities to use direct quotes of study participants to raise awareness and allow the reader to gain an understanding about the issues that impact students from their perspective.

*No two journeys are alike.* In this section regarding the first factor of Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, *situation*, Black male community college students shared information and explained their thoughts as to what could be done to increase academic achievement and persistence. Students identified the importance of having a plan for success, taking their studies in college seriously, and using available resources to increase their chances of current and future success. However, there were additional factors that student participants discussed during interviews that impacted individual situations differently.

For example, a third (three) of the student participants held student leadership positions in a recognized club or organization at their respective institutions. As a result, they were actively involved in the development and sponsorship of activities, events, and programs aside from academic obligations. In addition, a third (three) of student participants were student athletes who played a college-sanctioned sport while persisting toward degree completion. Student participants also included veterans, a single parent, a
transfer student, and students who participated in early college programming in high school. The experiences of student participants highlight their unique journeys in higher education.

_A plan is important to success._ Eight (88.89%) of the nine student participants identified having a plan that allowed them to continue to persist toward academic achievement and graduation. BMS #1, an Electronic Media Communication major stated: “I plan to graduate this May and transfer to SUNY Purchase, where I’ve already been accepted under Play Writing/Screen Writing” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 1). BMS #1 explained his intent to continue to position himself for academic success, “once there, I plan on doing an internship with their television station; within either their programming section or their studio, um, department” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 1). BMS #3, a Business Administration major, explained his plan as: “basically to continue school to get Master’s degree. Basically, you know, Bachelor’s, Master’s, hopefully in Business or you know, Accounting, majoring in Accounting or minor” (BMS #3, 2017, p. 2). Student participants also indicated long-term goals that included educational and career objectives that they were striving to achieve. BMS #7, a Human Services major, explained that his plan included: “to work in the schools helping students who are struggling with particular courses, and my long-term goal is [to] become a social worker, helping families who are in need” (BMS #7, 2017, p. 1). BMS #6, an Electrical Engineering Technology major, shared that his plan might shift away from the technology route. While he remains interested in engineering, he said: “I’m interested in doing education ‘cause I feel like being a teacher is really important to show, to actually give back all you learned” (BMS
Don’t waste the opportunity. In responding to a question regarding the historical underachievement of Black male students in terms of graduation rates, student participants stated that the reasons Black male students continued to struggle in higher education is because: they did not take college seriously, display bad habits, and do not take advantage of available resources. BMS #1 stated:

I think a lot of Black males don’t take college seriously. Um, especially if they’re at a community college. They don’t, they don’t think of it as something that is going to be a challenge. They come in feeling that it’s, it’s going to be a cake walk or like some friends that I have, they came and they just didn’t go to class. I just feel like they just don’t take it very seriously. (BMS #1, 2017, p. 3)

Another participant, BMS #4 stated: “I would say Black male students not going to class; just coming here, coming up here just to get away from home” (BMS #4, 2017, p. 2).

BMS #6 said:

So it becomes very hard to learn and study while most of the [negative] stuff that goes [on] around campus. [There needs to be more attention] in campus dorms which [have] become a very big problem. [Students], they get involved in those [negative] kinds of [things] stuff, which causes them to miss out on classes, miss out on exams and stuff like that, which causes them to fail most of their classes, which turns out to be like that. (BMS #6, 2017, pp. 3-4)

BMS #2 believed Black male students on campus at his institution were not taking advantage of what the institution had to offer related to supporting their academic
progression and enjoyment on campus. BMS #2 explained, “I think it’s, we’re not taking advantage of what’s given to us, to be honest” (BMS #2, 2017, p. 3). Another participant, BMS #8, explained, “I believe their mind is just not in the right place. They’re not focused on actually getting an education” (BMS #8, 2017, p. 4).

**Self.** The second component in the 4S model, *self*, illustrated unique characteristics of each individual student participant. Student participants were very diverse. Examples of their diversity was expressed by: (a) their participation in college-prep programs, (b) knowledge about their community colleges, and (c) benefits that led to their enrollment at a community college.

*Pre-college program participation.* Black male students explained how participation in an early college program aided their persistence in college. For example, three participants enrolled in a college-prep program before graduating from high school which gave them exposure to the rigors of college before enrolling. BMS #1 shared the following:

In high school, I was a part of a program that, I was a part of two separate programs. One program, I was allowed to take college classes at my high school with, ah, credits given to me from this community college. And then my, that one started my junior year and then my senior year, I was able to take classes on campus, um, on campus at the same institution. So, once I was there, I really didn’t understand, I really wasn’t, I don’t think I was prepared to go to a 4-year yet, so I decided to stay here and get my 2-year degree. (BMS #1, 2017, p. 2)

BMS #2 explained how his participation in a college preparation program helped him understand his options and what path would best fit his needs. BMS #2 said:
Before I even started college, I was in a program called Upward Bound. So, they actually prepped me for like, they . . . I didn’t really want to go, come to college to be honest, and then they, like, prepped me, saying, like, community college is good especially since you don’t want to go to college, so it can start you off there, and then if you want to keep going, um, it can show you, like, the way to keep going. (BMS #2, 2017, p. 1)

**Negative perception of community college.** Based on inaccurate information they received, student participants were required to seek out information about community colleges. They explained the negative information they received resulted in a negative view, initially, of community colleges. BMS #3 explained the information he received about community colleges initially gave him a negative perspective:

I used to hear people talk about…in a negative way, like it’s low [status], based on, resources; you know knowledge-wise, intelligence. So, I really didn’t [want to go there]. I started thinking that way and then when I started reading about it, talking to people who [go] here, and the teachers that are new, they said that’s not true. So then, I had a different perspective. (BMS #3, 2017, p. 1)

BMS #7 also shared a similar, negative outlook initially about community colleges. BMS #7 said, “I thought it was like, not a serious school, you know. I thought SUNY was like the lower school that people usually go to” (BMS #7, 2017, p. 1). BMS #8 was another student who had a negative initial perception of community colleges. BMS #8 said, “my thoughts were, I thought it was degrading at first, like, for people go to a community college. I thought it was below or belittling . . . belittling someone” (BMS #8, 2017, p. 1).
Positive benefits of attending community colleges. Student participants who received negative information that led to initial negative attitude toward community colleges shifted once they sought information on their own. Student participants identified community colleges as a cheaper, more affordable option; and community colleges’ settings have positive benefits.

Affordable. One positive benefit of community colleges for student participants was it being a cheaper alternative to other higher education options. Community college’s inexpensive option was a better fit for these students whose socioeconomic status would have made attending institutions with higher costs more difficult. BMS #5 said, “I grew up in a low-income family just, I [was raised by a] single mother and community college was cheaper than a 4-year alternative. So, I went to a community college at first” (BMS #5, 2017, p. 3). BMS #6 shared “another factor was how, ah, cheap it was to come to community college because my family doesn’t really have a lot, large income. So, coming to community college was the best option” (BMS #6, 2017, p. 3). While gathering information about post-high school options, BMS #8 and BMS #9 shared similar accounts that illustrated why information they received about community college being a cheaper option was very important. BMS #9 explained:

They said it was cheaper, saved you money, and you’ll be able to qualify for, um, financial aid and stuff. So, I’m like, that’s a good, that’s a good move for me to make, so I thought it was good for me to come to a community college to start off here. (BMS #9, 2017, p. 1)

BMS #8 shared that he selected attending a community college because “it’s a lot cheaper, the classroom are more condensed, so the student gets more hands-on and more
teacher training. So, after hearing that and being in school for the first time, ah, made me appreciate it more” (BMS #8, 2017, p. 1).

Setting. BMS #1 spoke about the variety offered at community colleges for students who are not quite sure of identifying a major or those students who may not be in need of a bachelor’s degree:

My belief about community colleges before attending was that it was for people that didn’t know what they wanted to do yet. That it was like something, somewhere you went when you wanted to discover what you wanted to do or what you needed only required like a 2-year degree if you didn’t need a 4 year. (BMS #1, 2017, p. 1)

BMS #6 explained why he decided to start his undergraduate career at a community college:

Well, one of the things that really was a big factor in me to continue to enroll in a community college was the setting. The classroom settings which is, it’s not, it’s not a big, it’s not a big, ah, population in one class so that really, that was really helpful because when, ah, I’m in a big setting with a lot of other people, I tend not to understand most of the stuff. (BMS #6, 2017, p. 3)

In addition to the financial benefit previously highlighted by BMS #5, he explained an important relationship between his involvement in activities outside class and how it helped him create a sense of community while persisting toward graduation:

I found, like, a community. I got to know people, I joined clubs on campus like . . . like the . . . where I found, ah, like-minded individuals, and we kind of kept each other through it, at least that worked for me. (BMS, #5, 2017, p. 3)
Support. Student participants identified the presence of positive support as an influential factor in their success as community college students. Some students relied on members of their family for support, while other students developed relationships on campus with college employees who serve as mentors. A positive support system provided Black male students with sources of assistance that aided in their success.

On campus mentors. Student participants identified the presence of trusted resource(s) who made positive impacts, provided support, and guided them to additional support at their respective institutions. BMS #1 stated, “Here on campus, [name omitted] has helped me a lot with some college-related incidents. Um, also [name omitted] have helped me” (BMS #1, 2017, p. 5).

BMS #2 mentioned having a similar relationship with a mentor on campus at his institution. BMS #2 provided the following about one of his mentors:

[name omitted] pushes me to be better . . . not just as a leader. I feel like he pushes me to be better as a student, also, because he knows that um, although I’m a President, President of a club, I’m also a student, so he wants me to work as a student first, President later. So, um, like he, he just pushes me to be better.

(BMS #2, 2017, pp. 4-5)

BMS #7 provided insight into the variety of positive relationships on his campus that stretched across multiple offices and departments. He shared how he overcame his difficulty of interacting with faculty by embracing valued advice received from mentors. BMS #7 shared:

Yes, my professors. When I first started coming here, like, it was hard for me to talk to my professors but then as things got difficult, people advised me to go talk
to my professors, e-mail them, tell them what’s going on because some professors understand like nobody’s perfect and that things happen. So, I usually go to my professors when somethings not right or advising, or to…etcetera. (BMS #7, 2017, p. 3)

Based on his participation in an academic student-support program, which provides holistic support to low-income, academically disadvantaged students in an urban, high-poverty school district, BMS #9 explained his mentor, “did a lot of things here for me like, class wise, social wise; she’s been there as a friend. Like everything here, every, every success that I had here, I think it was cause of her” (BMS #9, 2017, p. 7).

**Off-campus support.** In addition to the support students received from individuals on campus at their respective institutions, Black male student participants identified separate supports that were in place, which aided in their persistence toward positive academic achievement and graduation. BMS #3 described his mentor was a former high school teacher who encouraged him to seek support when he needed it. BMS #3 shared:

> When I’m struggling in class, I still go, you know, go to my old high school trying to get help especially in Accounting. I have an Accounting teacher back, you know, back in high school so, he told me every time to drop by, you know, to ask him for help for anything. So, I do that! (BMS #3, 2017, p. 4)

**Family.** BMS #3 also explained the support he received from his family, which helped him persist and maintain positive academic achievement. BMS #3 explained:
My family, too! You know, education wise, they really support me and let you know, it’s, ah, it’s important for us, you know, for us to be in school and be able to overcome anything that gets in our way. (BMS #3, 2017, p. 4)

BMS #4 was another participant who identified his family as supportive of his academic pursuits. Since he was the first of his mother’s children to go to college, it was his aunt who provided helpful advice. BMS #4 said, “Like, my aunt, like, she be given me tips about stuff like, like, what I should do, like, how I should . . . plan out my work” (BMS #4, 2017, p. 3). BMS #6 also discussed the importance of support from his family. BMS #6 said: “my parents really push me and my siblings to work really hard, so they make sure we stay on top of everything that we do, especially about school. So, I would say yes, family is really important” (BMS #6, 2017, p. 5).

**Friends.** Student participants explained the value of having friends from high school enrolled in college with them and their positive impact. BMS #6 continued describing his support system with the following:

Not only just my family but my friends also. When we not in school, they make sure that we, before we do anything or we hang out, we do our work first for school before we can actually do the fun stuff later. (BMS #6, 2017, p. 5)

In addition, BMS #8 spoke about a trusted friend who supported him even though he did not have a lot of free time due to other obligations, when he stating, “I also have a friend. She helps me with whatever I need help with” (BMS #8, 2017, p. 6). BMS #9 also shared the impact his friends had on his persistence. He explained:

Having, like, friends that do, want to do the same thing, like, like people, people that want to go to school and stuff. Most of my friends are in school so I, I see that
as, like, being like what a student does, they have to like graduate, you know, get good grades and stuff like that. (BMS, #9, 2017, p. 4)

Summary of Results

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the factors related to the persistence of Black male community college students and to examine ways to end preconceived attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty. Faculty participants shared their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs related to the academic capabilities of Black male students and ending preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by faculty directed at Black male students. Black male student participants shared their experiences of persisting toward graduation as community college students.

Using initial/open coding, descriptive coding, values coding, axial coding, and in vivo coding, and axial coding, faculty and student data was presented to raise awareness relating to ending the process of preconceived attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty toward Black male students. Faculty and student participants shared similar ideas and suggestions as well as different views on needed action steps. The process of coding ensured the data was coded and analyzed to present clear themes related to the study’s central theme.

Faculty participants in this study completed an anonymous questionnaire that contained questions directed at their interactions and experiences with Black male community college students. SUNY community college math and English faculty were invited to participate in this study, and 300 e-mails were sent through Qualtrics, which allowed faculty to participate anonymously. Use of an anonymous questionnaire
identified what was believed to be the most effective way to gather information from faculty regarding their thoughts and beliefs about these students.

Through comparing data gathered from both participant groups; similarities, and differences were identified through the triangulation of data. Both groups of study participants explained what they thought needed to be done to end preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty directed toward the Black male students.

Student participants generated at least two themes related to persistence and positive academic achievement of Black male students through data collection. Through the process of initial/open coding, values coding, axial coding, and in vivo coding, the voice of the students was included in the findings.

The fifth and final chapter of this study provides additional summary information regarding findings of the study as well as information that explains limitations, recommendations, and implications for further potential research.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was threefold as it relates to raising awareness about issues impacting the persistence of Black male community college students. The first issue explored was the existence of preconceived attitudes and behaviors held by SUNY community college faculty toward Black male students. The second issue reviewed centered on exploring the lived experiences of Black male community college students attending SUNY community colleges. The final issue elicited information from faculty and student participants on ways to eradicate preconceived attitudes and behaviors. This study adds to the literature on the issues facing Black male students attending community colleges with the introduction of the perspective of community college faculty.

Black male students in higher education have struggled to persist at comparable rates to their male ethnic peers. From 1998-2016, researchers explored the lived experiences of Black male community college students to identify common challenges and successes. These researchers compiled data collected from Black male community college students that identified a list of non-cognitive issues such as, age, socioeconomic status, enrollment status, being a first-generation student, and marital status, as factors impacting success. While this data informed community colleges about demographics, and non-cognitive or non-academic barriers; this study goes further to gain an understanding of the obstacles facing Black male students’ academic ability and social
encumbrances, which have the potential to hinder the success of Black male community college students.

Missing from the literature about the experiences of Black male students in all levels of higher education was the voice of faculty. Faculty have not been introduced into the conversation about the impediments to academic success for Black male students. This qualitative, phenomenological study incorporated an anonymous questionnaire for community college faculty. Creswell (2016) identified the use of a questionnaire as an effective way to gather data. An anonymous questionnaire was used to gather insight from faculty while keeping their identity confidential. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, a questionnaire ensured that faculty could provide honest feedback, which is vital to the process of academic success for the Black male student. Attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by faculty can enlighten community college administrators, other faculty, and support staff in identifying areas of strength and weakness at community colleges, to ensure that Black male students have equitable support and equal opportunities for success. As such, community colleges would appeal to a larger numbers of Black male students, thereby increasing enrollment levels.

Through the use of Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory, this study was guided by the 4S model (situation, self, support, and strategies). Situation, the first factor in the 4S model, pertains to a specific event experienced by an individual (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Self, the second factor, considers each individual’s ability to deal with a given situation. Personal characteristics and experiences were expressed as supporting an individual’s ability to navigate situations (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The third factor in the
4S model is support. Support takes into account the social supports available to an individual, namely, relationships forged with family, friends, and other available systems of social support (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). The fourth and final factor in the 4S model is strategies. Strategies are defined as the tools or resources used by an individual to navigate or cope during a situation (Evans et al., 2009; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory helped identify the issues surrounding preconceived attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty that were directed at Black male community college students and the ability of said students to persist toward graduation. Each factor within the 4S model provided a framework for issues on both sides of the discussion between faculty and students, respectively. In addition to examining issues experienced by both participant groups, this study also used the process of data triangulation to identify similarities and differences to eliminating preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty members directed at Black male students.

Historically, the negative misrepresentation of Black males has impacted how they are viewed in academic settings (Brooms & Perry, 2016). The belief that Black males are lazy and highly unintelligent has served as the basis for the creation of attitudes, behaviors, and notions, globally, associated with their intellectual capabilities (Brooms & Perry, 2016). These counterproductive attitudes take a toll on Black male students in higher education. Since Black male college students have often navigated emotionally draining experiences related to negative messaging about their intelligence (Smith et al., 2007), over time, they began to disassociate themselves from the learning experience (Strayhorn, 2008). As a result of their experience, many Black male students
described institutions of higher learning as unreceptive and unsupportive educational environments that hindered academic success and caused harm to their psychological well-being (Smith et al., 2007).

From a historical perspective, bias impacts the perception others have toward Black males (Mitchell, 2015). Their perception could be impacted through unconscious bias. For example, in a presentation before faculty at Harvard University, Yale University Professor, Carl Dovidio, stated that White faculty members mastered the art of displaying unconscious bias by claiming not to see race or by being color-blind (Mitchell, 2015). Therefore, Black male students may have greater difficulty adjusting to college campuses that they perceive as unwelcoming and unsupportive (Bridges, 2011; Harper & Davis, 2012; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Jaggers & Iverson, 2012; Smith et al., 2007).

The study and resulting data addressed the following research questions:

1. What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?

2. What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of preconceived notions held by college faculty?

3. From the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated?

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College (Appendix G) prior to collecting data, and all study participants provided informed consent (Appendix H). The faculty participants were invited to complete an anonymous questionnaire using Qualtrics, an electronic survey tool. A total of 300
SUNY community college math and English faculty were identified through their institution’s public website that lists e-mail addresses. SUNY community college math and English faculty were targeted because those two subjects were identified as two SUNY general education requirements needed for graduation. Of the 300 invitations extended to faculty, 43 consented to participate. However, of the 43 who consented, the number of faculty who answered the questions and completed the questionnaire, ranged between 35 (11.67%) and 36 (12%) consistently.

Targeting seven community colleges in Central and Western New York (including the Finger Lakes) regions, nine students participated in this study by engaging in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Each interview was recorded using an electronic recording device, which allowed the researcher to transcribe the entire interview. Creswell (2016) stated that the number of participants in a phenomenological research study may range from three to 15.

Privacy and confidentiality concerns in qualitative research require researchers to take the necessary steps to keep the identity of participants safe from being identified (Creswell, 2016; Grossoehme, 2014). For this study, privacy and confidentiality concerns required the researcher to ensure that study participants were not identifiable based on the information they provided through the study’s data collection process. All information collected from the study was kept confidential and stored on a separate flash drive that is locked in a secure place within the researcher’s home. Two years after the study is published, all confidential files will be deleted. All study participants will remain confidential and their identities will not be shared. To demonstrate the
importance of maintaining study participant confidentiality, information in this study was reported in the aggregate.

**Implication of Findings**

For this qualitative research study, using a phenomenological approach, the data gathered was analyzed using a multilevel approach. A Likert scale was selected for use with the anonymous questionnaire. Likert scales can gather information from research respondents about individual attitudes and behaviors (McDonald, 2016). As a result, a questionnaire were considered to be the most effective way to gather sensitive data from faculty. Faculty data was analyzed using initial/open coding, descriptive coding, in vivo coding, and axial coding. Initial/open coding allowed the data to be placed into smaller, more manageable pieces to develop initial codes and themes. Thereafter, coded data was analyzed using descriptive, and in vivo coding to provide further meaning and clarity.

The final step in the coding process for faculty data was axial coding; to ensure that the reconfiguration of themed data was grouped together and the groupings were related.

Findings of this study add to the research focused on Black male students in higher education, specifically at the community college level. It expands the discussion to encourage engagement with faculty and staff. Black male students have remained near the bottom over the last 20 years, with low graduation rates. In 2009, approximately four out of every seven Black male students enrolled in higher education attended a community colleges (Urias & Wood, 2014). However, nearly 12% dropped out after the first year, and the rate of dropouts almost tripled by the second year (Urias & Wood, 2014). Staggeringly, over 72% of Black males left college without earning a certificate or degree in 6 years (Urias & Wood, 2014).
Black male study participants, generally had positive things to say about faculty. However, there were instances where student participants expressed the idea faculty need to be more understanding surfaced. As a result of information provided by study participants, Black male students believed faculty who demonstrated more understanding would help make it easier for this group of students to connect and foster relationships with them.

The findings for this study include:

1. RQ1: What are faculty members’ preconceived notions of Black male college students?
   - History of underachieving in college
   - Impact of negative stereotypes
   - Equal academic capabilities
   - Institutional support
   - Positive faculty interactions

2. RQ2: What strategies do Black male students at 2-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of their perception of preconceived notions held by faculty?
   - Time management
   - Ask for help when needed
   - Get involved on campus and network

3. RQ3: From the perspective of SUNY community college faculty and Black male students in Central and Western New York, how are faculty members’ preconceived notions of said Black male students eradicated?
• Similarities
  ▪ Take your education seriously
  ▪ Ask for help
  ▪ More employee diversity
  ▪ Learn who they are

• Differences
  ▪ Role of institution
  ▪ Sense of belonging

Limitations

There are three limitations of note that surfaced for this study. Specifically, student sample size, self-reported data, and researcher status.

Sample size. It was difficult to determine the exact number of eligible Black male students that could have participated in this study. This study occurred during the spring 2017 semester, and while SUNY reported 26,116 African American/Black students were enrolled at SUNY community college for fall 2016, there is no specific information available related to individual institutions. Based on using the following formula, total number of African American/Black students multiplied by the percentage of full time enrolled students, the number was then multiplied by percentage of male students enrolled. As a result, it was hypothesized that at least 2,079 full-time Black male students were enrolled in the seven community colleges in the identified regions may have been eligible. Accounting for attrition at a modest rate of 10%, the number dropped to 1,871. Whether the enrollment for 2016-2017 remained constant is difficult to say, however, with nine student participants, there obviously was much more to be
gleaned from the diversity of experiences available from Black male students who attend SUNY community colleges. Furthermore, the findings might be different if Black females or other ethnic minorities were considered; and, should research expand to 4-year institutions, or HBCUs, findings would expand exponentially. Further student participants were recruited without soliciting information from staff members at any of the seven identified institutions. The timing of the study, near the end of the academic year, would not allow for securing IRB approval from each of the colleges, thus limiting specific student statistics.

**Self-reported data.** It is assumed that the study participants provided honest responses. However, faculty were asked on report on the attitudes and behaviors of peers. Responses may have reflected embellishments, untruths, and/or misinformation. Additionally, responses gathered from the anonymous questionnaire completed by the faculty did not permit follow-up questions to gain a better understanding of their opinions of Black male students. However, the information presented by the researcher is authentic, and reflects the data provided by participants.

**Researcher status.** As a Black male graduate of a SUNY community college, this study was of great importance. The researcher’s personal experiences as a community college graduate shaped the study; however, by bracketing personal experiences of Black male students at the time of this study yielded rich data in an eloquent fashion.

As a student researcher, the inability to spend extended amounts of time on individual campuses limited contact with the various student populations. Further, by
excluding the official involvement of the seven community colleges whose students were being targeted, the snowballing approach was less effective.

Although there were limitations, each of them can serve future researchers as they study ways in which institutions of higher education can be more effective in graduating Black male students, and it can be applicable for other student populations as well.

**Recommendations**

The findings of this study can be used to heighten awareness of the need for greater staff and faculty diversity at community colleges, improve understanding about Black male community college students, and provide training and additional resources for faculty to support the persistence of these students. The information gathered from the faculty and student participants demonstrate that persistence of Black male students at community colleges is multidimensional and is influenced by the students themselves, faculty, and other systems that surround them. There are two broad recommendations that are advanced. First, community colleges, specifically, and higher education, generally, can increase enrollment with diverse populations if effective supports are implemented. Said supports should be influenced by the identified needs of students and include at a minimum: recruiting and hiring of a more diverse staff at all levels (faculty, staff, administration); mentoring programs and other support programming, which are constituted based on the voices of students; and pre-college programming that will assist students in the acclamation process to college.

The second recommendation is to continue research that focuses on retaining Black male students and ensuring their persistence to graduation. This can be extended to Black females and other minority populations. There is much work to be done
research-wise as it relates to securing the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty and staff as they interact with populations that do not reflect the majority population. Preconceived notions toward any population has the potential to limit the success of not only the students, but the colleges and national advancement as a whole.

Conclusion

This qualitative research sought to explore the lived experiences of Black male community college students and introduce the perspective of faculty into the conversation. The research conducted up to this point has focused on the experiences of students, highlighting their college experience. From 2000 to 2015, Black male community college students were near the bottom of all male ethnic student groups who earned an associate degree (NCES, n.d.-a.). For those who are successful in persisting beyond the first term, the researcher studied SUNY community college students to gain insight into strategies/relationships/supports that influenced how they were able to persist. The perspectives gleaned may add a greater dimension to understanding the issues impacting Black male students due to preconceived attitudes and behaviors of community college faculty.

This study was guided by Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory. Schlossberg’s transition theory includes the 4S model that include situation, self, support, and strategies. Each factor in the 4S model provided meaning that was connected to the overall success of the Black male participants explaining their experiences and sharing how they were able to persist toward graduation. Further, this theory helped shape the research and interview questions for this study.
This qualitative phenomenological study incorporated two separate data collection tools. The data collection tool used for the students was a one-on-one, semi-structured interview. No demographic information was collected that would help identify the student was captured in this study. Each interview was recorded using an audio recording, which then allowed for the recordings to be transcribed. Each interview question was aligned with one of the themes in Schlossberg’s (2011) transition theory to ensure the information gathered from the interviews would then provide first hand data that responded to research questions.

For faculty participants, an anonymous questionnaire was used, which allowed them the opportunity to share honest information on a sensitive topic, namely, their preconceived attitudes and behaviors directed at Black male community college students. The anonymous questionnaire was distributed to the faculty using Qualtrics, a web-based, electronic tool (Qualtrics, n.d.). Qualtrics also offered additional features to ensure the data gathered was authentic.

The inclusion of the faculty in this study added another dimension to the discussion involving the persistence of Black male students in college. Their participation added a perspective and insight that creates opportunities for more research involving other historically underrepresented groups in higher education who struggle to graduate or graduate at much lower rates compared to White students. Introducing the thoughts and opinions of faculty allowed for the data gathered to be compared and analyzed for commonality.

Researchers like Bush and Bush (2010) and Wood (2014a) recommended taking a closer look at institutional factors such as faculty and their perceptions of Black male
students. Black male student participants from previous research studies expressed feelings of inadequancies related to how they believed faculty and other students perceived them. This study demonstrated an opportunity to identify faculty’s opinion of Black male students’ academic capabilities, how Black male students persisted toward graduation, and determine the similarities and differences from the perspective of both participant groups relative to ending preconceived notions. Going forward, researchers have the ability to engage both groups in one research study and determine the authenticity of information like never before. Each group of participants is shaped by their experience, and this study has demonstrated the potential for the implementation of support to create understanding about the needs of each group.

As a result of this study introducing faculty into the discussion and recognizing the need to address preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty, resources and regular training through professional development could be established. The opportunity for faculty to participate in training and professional development would provide forums for gaining knowledge related to supporting the holistic (academic, support, etc.) needs of Black male community college students as they persist toward graduation. Black male students want to succeed in higher education. They have many motivators that include family, friends, growing up in single-parent homes, and dreams to make a difference in their career field.

Black male student participants were not a homogenous group. They were not all the same. They had varying responsibilities in their personal lives. Diversity among them ranged from student-athletes, to campus-wide student leaders; all, individuals looking to provide better opportunities for their families. Through partnership
opportunities, dialogue, and creative programming that focuses on the issues faced by Black male students and other historically underrepresented groups, dispelling myths and stigmas associated with Black male students can help institutions understand how to support these students from accepted and enrolled, to graduates of the institution. Black male student participants emphasized the importance of wanting to be seen as equal individuals, receiving equitable support, and capable of achieving success while persisting toward college graduation.
References


SUNY. (n.d.-a). *Campus requirements*. Retrieved from https://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/campus-requirements/


Appendix A

ATTENTION:
BLACK MALE
SUNY COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Have you encountered challenges in pursuit of your degree?
- Are you on track to graduate?
- How has your experience been at this institution?
- Have you completed at least 1 semester?
- Would you like to win a Visa or MasterCard gift card?

Participating in this study will allow your experiences as a Black male Community College student to be heard.

If you are interested in participating in a research study about the experiences of Black male community college students, please contact Researcher, Mr. Joshua A. Martin at jam01716@sjfc.edu
Dear SUNY Community College Faculty Member,

I am a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College (SJFC) in Rochester, New York. As part of my doctoral research, I am conducting a study to determine faculty perceptions of Black male community college students. I want to hear what you think - your ideas and opinions count.

You will be asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire. The questionnaire will be open for a four-week period from the date you receive this e-mail. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire once you begin.

There are no risks to you by completing the questionnaire. All questionnaire responses will be confidential; no one will be able to identify you when the results are reported. You are asked to provide information (your age range, gender, ethnicity, and setting where you teach) in the demographics box which will serve as you providing consent to participate.

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Access to the questionnaire is available through the link below: (to be included once questions are confirmed)

Thank you for your willingness to help with this research. Your input is very valuable and will help higher education institutions positively impact student success and retention.

I sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to participate.

Joshua A. Martin, M.A., M.S.
Doctoral Student and Researcher
St. John Fisher College
Doctoral Program in Executive Leadership
Appendix C

Questionnaire Questions

Block 1 (Consent)

1. Questionnaire Consent
   a. Consent
   b. No consent

Block 2 (Demographic Information)

2. What is your Gender
   a. Specify

3. Age
   a. 21-34
   b. 35-44
   c. 45-54
   d. 55-64
   e. 65+

4. Which of the following races do you consider yourself to be (select all that apply)
   a. White
   b. Black
   c. American Indian
   d. Asian
   e. Native Hawaiian
   f. Other
   g. Hispanic or Latino American

5. What is the enrollment size of your institution?
   a. Less than 1000
   b. 1000-5999
   c. 6000-10999
   d. 11000-14999
   e. 15000+

6. What is your faculty status at this institution?
   a. Adjunct
   b. Instructor
   c. Associate Professor
   d. Professor
   e. Other: Specify
Block 3 (Questions in this block are aligned with Research Question 1)

7. I recognize that racism affects how Black male students are viewed on campus.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

8. I am aware that Black male students have historically realized lower academic achievement and graduation rates in higher education.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

9. I feel this institution does a good job providing programs and activities to promote the needs of Black male students.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

10. I believe this institution provides a welcoming environment for Black male students to succeed.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
    d. Somewhat Disagree
    e. Disagree
    f. Strongly Disagree

11. I can name various programs on campus that support the academic achievement and persistence of Black male students at this institution. (Short Answer Response)

12. I view Black male students as capable of becoming scholars, able to master the subject matter.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat agree
d. Somewhat Disagree
  e. Disagree
  f. Strongly Disagree

13. Much of the information that I know/believe about Black male students comes from what I read in the news and see on television.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

14. A color-blind approach to engaging others ensures respect and appreciation for all people including Black male students.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

15. I am aware of at least one scholarship available at my institution that is reserved for Black male students.
   a. Specify:

16. I can help improve the self-esteem of Black male students by valuing their cultural background and demonstrating an awareness to issues impacting their community.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

17. I have an open door policy. Meaning, I avail myself to all students equally for academic and other support.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

18. I believe Black male students' academic improves when they have access to unbiased environments that include effective learning resources.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
d. Somewhat Disagree
e. Disagree
f. Strongly Disagree

19. I can name at least one full time Black male faculty member at this institution that I would feel comfortable recommending as positive role models for Black male students on campus.
   a. Yes
   b. No

20. I can name at least one full time male administrator at the Director's level or higher at this institution I could identify and feel comfortable recommending as a positive role model for Black male students on campus.
   a. Yes
   b. No

Block 4

21. Compared to the other students in my class, I believe Black males have equal academic capabilities.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
c. Somewhat agree
d. Somewhat Disagree
e. Disagree
f. Strongly Disagree

22. Compared to the other students in my class, I treat Black male students with an equal amount of respect and dignity.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
c. Somewhat agree
d. Somewhat Disagree
e. Disagree
f. Strongly Disagree

23. Compared to the other students in my class, I believe Black male students are equally as hard working.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
c. Somewhat agree
d. Somewhat Disagree
e. Disagree
f. Strongly Disagree

24. Compared to White male students, I view Black male students as equally honest and trustworthy.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
25. Outside of class, I initiate equally as many interactions with Black males as with other racial/ethnic groups.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

26. Compared to the other students in my class, I view Black male students as intimidating.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

27. Compared to the other students in my class, Black male students exhibit behaviors that express to me they do not care about their education.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Somewhat agree
   d. Somewhat Disagree
   e. Disagree
   f. Strongly Disagree

28. Compared to other students in my class, Black male students are reluctant to ask for help.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

29. Compared to other students in my class, Black male students are academically unprepared to succeed in college.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

30. Do you know faculty at your institution who regularly demean, ignore, and or systemically assign lower grades to Black males students?
   a. Yes
b. No

31. What can faculty do to remove preconceived attitudes and behaviors that relate to or are directed toward Black male students? (Short Answer Option)

32. What suggestions or recommendations would you make to your institution to help faculty remove preconceived attitudes and behaviors toward Black students generally, and Black males specifically? (Short Answer Option)

33. What suggestions or recommendations would you make to Black male students that would help remove preconceived attitudes and behaviors of faculty (Short Answer Option)

Do you have additional comments, please add below (Short Answer Option)
**Appendix D**

**Interview Questions for Black Male Student Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Theory</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schlossberg’s Transition Theory – 4Ss (Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies)</td>
<td>1. What are faculty perceptions of Black male college students?</td>
<td>Ice Breaker Questions 1 and 2 plus Interview Questions 1 and 7 connected to Self of Schlossberg’s 4Ss; provide information to answer research question 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What strategies do Black male students at two-year colleges employ in order to persist in spite of their perception of preconceived notions held by faculty?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. How do preconceived notions (attitudes and behaviors), and the formation of said about Black male students get eradicated from the perspective of Black male students and faculty at community colleges in Central and Western New York?</td>
<td>Interview Questions 2 and 3 connected to Situation of Schlossberg’s 4Ss; provide information to answer research question 2</td>
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<td>Interview Questions 4 and 5 connected to Support of Schlossberg’s 4Ss; provide information to answer research question 2</td>
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<td>Interview Questions 6 – 9 connected to Strategies of Schlossberg’s 4Ss; provide information to answer research question 2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Interview Questions 10 – 12 provide information to answer research question 3</td>
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</table>
Ice Breaker Questions

Student participants will be reminded that they are not required to answer any question that they think would create any unexpected stress, anxiety, or mental/emotional discomfort. Choosing not to answer a question will not jeopardize their participation in the study in any way.

1. Prior to enrolling at your current institution, what were your thoughts about community colleges? (Self) (Research Question 2)

2. What is your major?

3. Are you enrolled part-time or full-time?

4. What’s your overall GPA?

5. What are your short-term and long-term educational and career goals? (Self) (Research Question 2)

Interview Questions

1. What factors or influences motivated you, as a Black male student, to continue to enroll in classes as a community college student? (Self) (Research Question 2)

2. The graduation rate for Black male students enrolled at community colleges are among the lowest of all male community college students. What factors do you believe contribute to Black male students ranking at the bottom of the graduation list? (Situation) (Research Question 2)

3. Please name all the student support programs offered on-campus at your institution that you are aware of since enrolling at your institution. Do you participate in any of those programs? Why or why not? (Support) (Research Question 2)

4. Are there any additional forms of support (on and/or off campus) that have aided in your success (educational, emotional, and social) as you work towards graduation? (Support) (Research Question 2)

5. What strategies have you learned from the various support systems helping you to continue to work toward graduation that you feel would benefit other Black male students at this institution?.. (Strategies) (Research Question 2)

6. What strategies have you employed in order to be successful at this institution? (Strategies) (Self; Strategies) (Research Question 2)

7. Looking at the bigger picture, what can Black male students across the state and throughout the country do to improve their graduation rates at community colleges? (Strategies) (Research Question 2)
8. What can college staff and administrators at your institution do to increase the number of Black males who maintain positive academic achievement toward graduation? (Strategies) (Research Question 3)

9. Preconceived attitudes and beliefs can be explained as having a predetermined idea about something or someone that may or may not be true. Do you believe faculty members have preconceived attitudes and beliefs regarding the academic capabilities for Black male compared to their ethnic male peers? (Situation) (Research Question 3)

10. What causes faculty members to have preconceived notions? (Situation) (Research Question 3)

11. Does the presence of preconceived notions held by faculty contribute to a students’ success or lack thereof? (Situation) (Research Question 3)

12. How do preconceived notions impact the sense of belonging on campus for Black male students? (Situation) (Research Question 3)

13. What do you believe can be done to end preconceived notions held by faculty members?
   1. What do faculty need to do?
   2. What does the institution need to do?
   3. What do Black male students need to do? (Strategies) (Research Question 3)
Appendix E

Student Letter – Study Overview

Spring 2017

Dear Black Male Student Participant,

First and foremost, thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study about the lived experiences of Black male students enrolled at SUNY community colleges. I am a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College (SJFC) in Rochester, New York. This study proposal has been reviewed and approved by St. John Fisher College’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). As part of my doctoral research, I am conducting one-on-one interviews with Black male students about their experiences as a SUNY community college student. Your input and insight truly matters.

The information included in this letter is to inform you of your role as a participant, how the information you provide will be used; and how your identity will remain confidential. The in-person interview will be recorded and is expected to take approximately 30-45 minutes.

The researcher will have the audio transcript of the interview transcribed by a third-party company that specializes in audio transcription. Your identity will not be used and no one will be able to identify you.

As a result of your participation in this research study, there are no known risks associated with your involvement as an interview participant. The benefits of your participation included sharing information about the experiences of Black male students in community colleges, academic achievement, and persistence. As a study participant, you may enter a drawing to win a $20 Visa or MasterCard gift card. Gift cards will be drawn randomly at the conclusion of all interviews. If you are willing to enter the drawing, you must your contact information and mailing address in the event that you are one of the winners.

I will contact you to confirm that I have your correct contact information, and identify a time and location for our interview that works for your schedule.

Thank you again for your time. I appreciate your willingness to share your experiences as a Black male community college student. If you know other Black male students that might like to
participate, please have them contact me. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jam01716@sjfc.edu.

Joshua A. Martin, M.A., M.S.
Doctoral Student and Researcher
St. John Fisher College
Doctoral Program in Executive Leadership
Appendix F

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSES/WORK REQUIREMENTS*

* NOTE: See CITI Program Requirement Report for the comple table, which is required for the course. See the CITI Program Website for details.

- Name: [redacted]
- Email: [redacted]@emory.edu
- Institution Affiliation: [redacted] College
- Institution Unit: School of Education
- Phone: [redacted]

- Curriculum Group: Social & Behavioral Research - Data Protection
- Course Learner Group: Social & Behavioral Research
- Stage: Stage 1 - Basic Course

- Report ID: 22A456207
- Completion Date: 22-Aug-2016
- Reiteration Date: 22-Aug-2019
- Minimum Passing: 90
- Reported Score*: 96

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For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program and must have been a paid independent learner.

Visit: [www.citi.org](http://www.citi.org)

CITI Program
Email: citty@cti.org
Phone: 888-555-2345
Web: [www.citi.org](http://www.citi.org)
Appendix G

IRB Approval Letter

April 18, 2017

File No: 3702-031617-15

Joshua Martin
St. John Fisher College

Dear Mr. Martin:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “The Persistence of Black Male Community College Students and the Impact of Preconceived Attitudes and Behaviors of Faculty.”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at irb@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

ELB: jdr
Appendix H

Informed Consent for Student Participants

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: The Persistence of Black Male Community College Students and the Impact of Preconceived Attitudes and Behaviors of Faculty

Name of researcher(s): Joshua A. Martin, M.A., M.S., Ed.D. candidate, SJFC

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Linda Hickmon Evans

Phone for further information: [Redacted]

Purpose of study: Explore the internal (student) and external (faculty) factors that may impact the persistence of Black male community college students

Place of study: SUNY community colleges throughout Central and Western New York

Length of participation: 30 - 45 minute interview

Risks & Benefits: There are low to minimal social, psychological, economic, or legal risks to participants from the interview process. Study participants who indicate they want to be entered into the drawing will have the opportunity to win one of five $20 Visa or MasterCard gift cards

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Each student participant will receive a unique identifier that will identify him in the study. Data collected will be kept separate from the consent forms. In the study, participants will only be identified by the unique identifier assigned. There will be no contact with college officials. All information/documents will be kept locked in a secure location by the researcher.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study. Additionally, **I have been informed that the interview will be recorded, and that by signing this Consent form, I give my permission for said recording.**

___________________________ ____________________________  _________  
Print name (Participant)   Signature    Date

___________________________ ____________________________  _________
Print name (Investigator)   Signature    Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact Joshua A. Martin at ________________ for appropriate referrals.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed and approved this study. If you experience any physical or emotional discomfort as a result of your participation, please visit the Health/Wellness Services or the Counseling Department on your campus. Information about these services will be shared with student participants. For any concerns regarding this study, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at: (585) 385-8012, or by e-mail at: irb@sjfc.edu.