6-28-2024

Black Men Who Participate in an urban Community College Men of Color Initiative: A phenomenological study

Steven Hardy
Rowan University

BLACK MEN WHO PARTICIPATE IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEN OF COLOR INITIATIVE - A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Steven Darrell Hardy

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Research
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
April 10, 2024

Dissertation Chair: MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D., Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Research

Committee Members:
Monica Reed Kerrigan, Ed.D., Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Research
James Coaxum III, Ph.D., Department of Educational Leadership, Administration, and Research

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, whose love and support strengthened my resolve. To my daughters, whose encouragement and understanding have fueled my determination. And to my parents, whose lessons in hard work and perseverance laid the foundation for this achievement.

Acknowledgments

I am profoundly grateful for the unwavering support I received throughout this transformative journey. Foremost, I extend my deepest appreciation to my dissertation chair, Dr. MaryBeth Walpole, whose exceptional guidance and encouragement propelled me forward. Amidst the trials of the COVID-19 pandemic, her dedication to education proved to be a beacon of inspiration. Dr. Walpole's fervor challenged and motivated me, instilling a deeper sense of purpose and focus on my work. I am truly indebted to her for the profound impact she has had on both my academic endeavors and personal growth.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my wife, Lisa, for her unwavering commitment to supporting our family, allowing me to dedicate myself fully to my research. I am particularly thankful to her and our daughters for being my constant source of motivation and encouragement, especially during the most challenging moments of this journey.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my classmates from the 2017 CCLI cohort. I am immensely grateful for the valuable lessons I learned from each of you.

Lastly, thank you to the student participants who shared their educational experiences and journey with me, it was a rewarding and inspiring experience.

Abstract

Steven D. Hardy
BLACK MEN WHO PARTICIPATE IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE MEN OF COLOR INITIATIVE - A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
2023-2024
MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

This phenomenological study explored the perceptions and experiences of Black men who participated in the MOCI. The study uncovered insights into what aspects of the program were effective and where improvements could be made according to the student participants. Employing a phenomenological design, the research identified commonalities among the participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The structure of understanding surrounding participants in the MOCI program was meticulously facilitated using phenomenology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interviews were not just semi-structured but also empathetic, with prepared open-ended questions followed by probing inquiries, all aimed at capturing the essence of the students' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Saunders & Townsend, 2016).

Three research questions guided the study in elucidating the perceptions and experiences of Black men who participated in the MOCI program. This transcendental phenomenology research revealed that participants consistently expressed a sense of brotherhood, valued program activities and networking opportunities, and felt supported and cared for throughout their involvement.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents (Continued)

Table of Contents (Continued)

Table of Contents (Continued)

List of Figures

Figure Page

Chapter I

Introduction

The U.S. racial and ethnic makeup has changed substantially since its birth as a nation. In the past 20 years, the changes have been even more dramatic than any other time in the country's history (Espinosa et al., 2019). This increasing racial and ethnic diversity affords a multitude of benefits at all stages of education and in the workforce. Some of the rich advantages of diversity include greater productivity, innovation, and cultural competence, enabling connections with people of different cultures, cultural/ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses (Espinosa et al., 2019; Garrido et al., 2019). However, these benefits can only be maximized when every individual is educated and treated equitably regardless of race or ethnicity (Espinosa et al., 2019; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). This equity is clearly reflected in American community colleges, which address equity and inclusion through open-door access (Espinosa et al., 2019; Glenn, 2003).

The community college is an American innovation established to prepare high school graduates with the first two years of college education to earn an associate degree and transfer to a four-year institution (Beach, 2011). In addition, community colleges were established to create open access to education for rural communities, where distance created a barrier, and for disenfranchised communities to address racial integration by integrating students across ethnic and racial lines (Glenn, 2003). Today, community colleges serve students beyond the original mandate. Many students who attend community colleges are currently beyond the age of 24, employed at least part-time, and are supporting a family in contrast to the traditional first-time college student.

Additionally, roughly half of community college students are low-income with no financial support from their parents, and a third are students of color (Espinosa et al., 2019).

Education is deemed as a pathway to prosperity (Thomas & Reed, 2007). Advanced learning is more critical now than ever in history due to the continuous evolution of technology and the demand for a highly skilled workforce (Blank, 2016). So, education, especially in one's formative years is vital. Yet, in the U.S, the K-12 system and postsecondary institutions are difficult to navigate for many Black men. Black men face obstacles the moment they enter the K-12 system (Kohli et al., 2017). Certain disparities are created by teachers and school administration: these disparities result from implicit and explicit bias and begin in early childhood settings (Smith-McLallen et al., 2006; Wesley & Ellis, 2017). Teachers and administrators in the K-12 system construct barriers for some Black boys; their biases influence how they administer discipline. For example, at an early age, Black boys receive corporal punishment more often and more severely than their White counterparts (GAO, 2018). Black boys' struggles during their formative years in the K-12 system create a real challenge for them to obtain a high school degree; this translates to some of these young men becoming high school dropouts. The prospect of being a person of color and a dropout puts these young boys on a path that leads to negative encounters with law enforcement (Kohli et al., 2017; Smith & Harper, 2015). These legal interactions translate to a likelihood of incarceration (Bryan, 2017; Jones et al., 2018). Often, obstacles Black boys face in their pursuit of education in their formative years leave them with an accumulation of academic knowledge deemed not college-ready (Kohli et al., 2017; Smith & Harper, 2015).

Many men of color, specifically Black men, have enrolled at their local community college as the path to their potential (Bush & Bush, 2010). The pathway to their potential translates to earning a degree or certificate to earn a higher living wage. However, these men are less likely to graduate with an associate degree or to transfer than are their peers (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; NCES, 2019). Increasing the graduation rate of Black men can lead to increased earning potential and social standing for this often-marginalized population (Thomas & Reed, 2007). Yet, because of Black men's lower success rates, more work must be done to create a positive pathway and positive narrative for this marginalized group (Glenn, 2003; Harper, 2012; Harris et al., 2017; Urias et al., 2016).

Black men enroll at community colleges in high numbers due to the convenient locations, open admissions policies, and low cost (Bush & Bush, 2010; Espinosa et al., 2019; Glenn, 2003). However, a growing enrollment does not translate to increased graduation rates at these institutions (Espinosa et al., 2019). The student population at community colleges includes a disproportionately high number of students who have been marginalized by the educational system. Thus, despite high enrollment, community colleges have meager completion rates (Bush & Bush, 2010; Espinosa et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) for males, the attainment for an associate degree was 25.7% for Black or African Americans, 30% for Hispanic or Latinos, 37.4% for White Americans, 30.2% for American Indian or Alaska Native, 20.3% for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 38.1% for Asian Americans (NCES, 2019.). Additionally, many students who enter the community college system become ensnared in remedial classes and ultimately drop out without transferring

or completing any degree or certificate program (Attewell et al., 2006). These outcomes are alarmingly true for one particular group, men of color, specifically Black men (CCCSE, 2014). While there have been numerous studies into persistence, graduation, and equity issues involving men of color, and specifically Black men attending two-year institutions, additional research is needed (Broom, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Bush & Bush, 2010; Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood et al., 2015). Community colleges have recognized these issues and increased their focus on enhancing the academic performance and educational experiences of Black men (Brooms, 2018; Glenn, 2003). However, much of the literature is based on a deficit-informed orientation as a foundation for developing a theory to improve outcomes for Black men who attend community colleges (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Urias et al., 2016). The deficit-oriented approach toward Black men by educators, politicians, and others hinders real progress (Harper, 2012).

Many men of color, specifically Black men, are perceived from a group perspective in negative terms and are often misunderstood and neglected as college students (Brooms, 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012). Black men are often viewed as nonexistent in the classroom, perpetuating a deficit narrative (Harper, 2012; Urias et al., 2016). A lot of literature describes approaches and interactions with Black men informed through a deficit narrative centered on identifying obstacles out of these students' control as the reason they fail. Scholars continue to explore the practices in which the roles, racial identities, socioeconomic statuses (SES), parents, teachers, and community members influence how Black men are taught and treated in the educational system that leads to unsuccessful outcomes (Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Urias et al., 2016). Additional complexity in how Black men are viewed involves media and

labels. Black men are often branded with labels and terms such as at-risk and endangered in the academic and social settings (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Harris & Wood, 2013). Some scholars focus on changing how the media perpetuates a deficit narrative that frames Black men as problems that need to be fixed (Brooms et al., 2018). Black men in urban community colleges face racial and ethnic barriers, and many must contend with an often-unfavorable SES (Harris & Wood, 2013). With such a gloomy outlook for this population, how can an institution create a program that helps the student feel engaged and motivated to strive for academic success – to complete?

One approach is targeted programming focused on outcome disparities of underserved men, such as structured, social cohesion programs that lead to increased student retention and graduation rates (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Hanover Research, 2014; Tinto, 2017). Programming can help students make friends and learn about the college experience, leading to better decision-making and improved experiences (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). These programs emphasize increased participation, improved time management skills, and better study skills that help acclimate students to institutional policies and procedures, all with the purpose of completion (Hanover Research, 2014). Programs geared towards Black men may increase outcomes because they are supported by an environment designed to create and cultivate success. These programs should make the students who participate feel a sense of belonging and worth within the college environment (Booker, 2007; Brooms, 2018; Harris & Wood, 2013). Environmental influences can have a significant impact on an individual. An analogy is the honeybee queen and worker. Two larvae with identical DNA, one raised to be a worker, the other a queen. While the two adults would be sharply differentiated across a

wide range of characteristics, including anatomical and physiological differences, the queen is determined by consuming the royal jelly (Tautz, 2008). As the larvae become older, their diet of royal jelly incorporates ever more pollen and honey, and in the final larval stage, some bees receive royal jelly while others do not (Tautz, 2008). The larvae that receive royal jelly throughout their development grow into queens. While this is not the only factor determining if larvae will become a worker or queen, it is a critical factor. Thus, incorporating programming to investigate the perception and attitudes – the royal jelly – can lead to a positive student transformation.

To foster such transformation, institutions have established engagement and mentoring programs that promote a safe environment for young men to form a brotherhood, which has been successful (Brooms et al., 2018; Smith & Harper, 2015). Moreover, successful programs promote an anti-deficit achievement orientation and are embedded with high levels of academic preparation, support, and motivation in order to generate comradery and commitment – the royal jelly (Brooms et al., 2018; Glenn, 2003; Harper, 2012). Black men who participate in these programs discover their identities through shared learning to explore manhood and masculinity; these discoveries help build confidence and set academic goals (Brooms et al., 2018). These programs create powerful opportunities for men to engage in critical reflection and sense-making about their educational experiences before, during, and after graduation (Urias et al., 2016). Programs or initiatives established with these components have reported results in which students succeed academically, accrue social capital, and activate it for personal and professional endeavors (Glenn, 2003; Smith & Harper, 2015; Urias et al., 2016). Such a targeted program with the aforementioned features, geared to helping Black men, is the

Black Male Initiative (BMI). A BMI focuses on encouraging and supporting the educational success of the participants (Brooms, 2018). A similar initiative targeted towards helping Black men and men of color is the Men of Color Initiative (MOCI) at the urban community college where this study took place. The MOCI, like the BMI, was constructed to foster success for men of color who traditionally are marginalized and in need of customized academic and personal guidance to meet them where they are (Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood et al., 2015).

Context

The setting for this study was a public, urban-serving community college located on the east coast. The institution serves a predominantly minority student population; it is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Also, the people served by the community college are highly diverse in terms of the non-traditional and low-income student population. Black or African American students account for 10.9% of the population. The community college has multiple campus locations, each under the leadership of the college president. The college president answers to a ten-member board of trustees who represent citizens of the county.

Statement of the Problem

Black men face a formidable future due to negative consequences for lower levels of education. Individuals whose highest educational attainment is high school, or some high school, have a higher chance of becoming homeless or incarcerated (Bryan, 2017; Jones et al., 2018). Assimilation into a higher education institution without a pathway appropriate for this often-marginalized group makes persistence and completion very difficult. Additionally, the attitudes of the dominant culture and systemic racism hinder

the progress of Black men (CCCSE, 2014; Kwate & Goodman, 2015; Pelzer, 2016; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). One strategy many colleges have adopted to assist Black men is creating BMI programs, or in the context of this study, the MOCI. This study focused on exploring the perceptions and experiences of Black students in the MOCI program.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the Black MOCI participants' perceptions of and experiences with the program as it relates to their pursuit of academic success. In-depth knowledge was obtained regarding the perceptions of Black men who participated in this enhanced program to identify what worked and what could be improved upon or added. The study was conducted using a phenomenological design to discover what the participants of the study have in common (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It was critical to focus greater attention on Black men because the more access individuals have to education, the more likely they are to become productive, fulfilled, tax paying citizens in society. Therefore, this study examined the perspectives of Black men through the individual's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

The research investigated the perceptions and experiences of the men who participated in the MOCI. Participant data was collected through personal interviews to explore these men's perceptions about the influence of MOCI on their academic journey. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do Black men describe their experiences in the MOCI program?
2. Why do Black men participate in the MOCI?

3. In what ways can the MOCI be helpful or improved?

Significance of the Study

Institutions can improve their performance by enhancing programming for Black men, explicitly addressing their unique needs to increase persistence, achievement, engagement, and completion rates (Glenn, 2003; Harris et al., 2017; Harris & Wood, 2013). This study provides insight from the Black men of the MOCI to explain the role the initiative played in the students' academic journeys. This study examined the experiences of Black men to identify practices that are beneficial and practices that could be improved from the student perspective. The discovery of what motivated Black men to participate in the MOCI can lead to improved strategies for attracting and retaining more Black men at the institution.

Research Design

Qualitative research was selected as the research design for this study. This design facilitated the development of a structure for understanding the men who participated in the enhanced programming, the MOCI (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design provided the necessary structure for conducting the study to understand how participants described and perceived their experiences in the program and the meaning they assigned to these experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; van Manen, 1990). Using a qualitative design allowed for the presentation of a rich and detailed profile of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Peoples, 2021). The qualitative design used in this research is phenomenology. Qualitative phenomenological research uses descriptive nonstatistical data to answer questions about the phenomena through the individual's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021). Qualitative phenomenological

research allows for a holistic view of the Black men's experiences in higher education articulated in their own words (Moustakas, 1994).

A theoretical underpinning is a collection of interrelated concepts used for understanding, analyzing, and designing ways to investigate and support the research. As my theoretical structure, I deployed the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) to capture the experiences and perceptions of Black men who participated in the MOCI (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The SEM is a theory-based framework for understanding human development introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1981). The SEM helped provide insight into the multifaceted and interactive effects MOCI had on personal and environmental factors (Allen et al., 2016). The SEM model investigates human development according to the individual or group environment; which incorporates the community they live in (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). This model functioned as the theoretical underpinning, which enabled research to be conducted to frame the analysis and demonstrate the ways in which multiple systems influenced Black men. (Allen et al., 2016; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The SEM provided a theoretical underpinning illustrated by nesting circles that places the individual in a circle in the center surrounded by various systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The SEM adopted for this research involves five systems. The student is the core system, surrounded by the other tiers; this level is about the individual – about their ability (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The microsystem, the next circle to the individual, contains the strongest influences and encompasses the interactions and relationships of the immediate surroundings; in this case this it includes those direct contacts such as family, peers, instructors, and in the context of this study, the MOCI program (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour,

2015). The mesosystem, the third circle, does not directly impact the individual but exerts positive and negative interactive forces on the individual, such as community contexts and social networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The exosystem, the fourth circle, includes forces within more extensive social system or the setting in which the microsystem and mesosystem are positioned. Finally, the macrosystem tier involves generalized laws and policies of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Definition of Terms

Throughout the study which explored the perceptions and lived experiences of Black men who attend community colleges, there are terms frequently used in this study. Therefore, the following definitions are included to provide better clarity for terms used in this study:

Black Male Initiative (BMI) – Program developed for Black male students to help increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of the participants (Brooms, 2018).

College readiness – Refers to the set of skills, knowledge, and behaviors a high school student should have upon graduation and entering their freshmen year of college (CCCSE, 2014).

Community college – Any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as the highest degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Cultural capital – The possession of knowledge, dispositions, orientations, intellect, credentials, tastes, and relationships that enable social mobility (Baber et al., 2016; Harker, 1984).

Men of Color Initiative (MOCI) – Designed to foster success for men of color who (a man who is not white) are first-generation college students, traditionally underrepresented groups, and students in need of academic and personal guidance (Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood et al., 2015).

Negative-Oriented – Negative-oriented strategies involve addressing and overcoming challenges, such as learning difficulties or behavioral issues, through targeted interventions. This approach uses past research that explains student failure and societal disadvantages to mitigate negative aspects and improve educational outcomes (Brooms, 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012).

Positive-oriented – Strategies aimed to create a holistic and nurturing learning environment that not only focuses on academic achievement but also supports students' social, emotional, and personal development based on past positive evidence and examples (CCCSE, 2014; Harper & Harris, 2012; Torrens et al., 2017).

Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) - Principally developed from scholarly work to further the understand the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Socioeconomic status (SES) – Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group; it is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (Eby, 2015; Fergusson et al., 2008).

Assumptions

This study adopted the position that the program at the institution was established to attract Black men to provide them with a support system to achieve academic success, persist, and graduate. The assumption embedded in this work is that the program

endeavored to create a positive college experience for the students. The results and trustworthiness of this study was contingent on the participants providing genuine responses during their interviews as these interviews make up the data collected as the foundation used to answer the research questions. Professional care was taken to establish rapport with participants, to explain to them that I was interested in their perceptions and experiences, and to engage them in member checking the data.

Delimitations and Limitations

A delimitation of this research is that the interviewed participants are Black men of various ages. The Coronavirus 2019 pandemic impacted enrollment in the MOCI. Some students returned to attend in part-time status instead of full-time, and some students did not return. Thus, multiple interviews were not a condition for conducting this study. Another possible limitation of this study is researcher bias because I held a leadership position at the institution and am a Black man.

Summary

Navigation through this body of work, which includes five chapters, begins with Chapter II, the introduction of the relevant background about this research topic. Chapter II encompasses a literature review about the educational experiences of Black men. Chapter III explains the methodology selected to conduct the critical work. The research design selected for this qualitative study is phenomenology. The phenomenological design was uniquely positioned to help capture the educational experiences of Black men from their earliest experiences. Chapter IV provides a listing of the results and findings based on the research. Finally, Chapter V culminates in an explanation of the study; discussion of the findings; answers to the research questions, implications for practice;

implications for future research; implications for leadership; and conclusion. This qualitative phenomenological work resulted in findings that answer the research questions about Black men participating in the MOCSI who seek education as the pathway to prosperity (Thomas & Reed, 2007). The next chapter provides a literature review.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Chapter II provides a literature review of relevant research explaining the educational experiences of Black men who attend community colleges. In this chapter, I present scholarship geared towards understanding the perceptions and experiences of Black men. This work discusses educational time lost and customized programming. Also covered in this chapter are some obstacles Black men as students face in their educational journeys, such as negative experiences towards education, low expectations by the student and instructor, low SES, and institutional racism. The long-standing gap in persistence and college completion measures separating Black men from other student groups continues to widen (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). Men of color, specifically Black men, have high aspirations when entering post-secondary institutions. So why do some fail while others thrive? Men of color are a considerable untapped resource that could help support the United States' social and economic development if this disenfranchised population received equitable access to college and the support they need to persist (Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). The 2016 cohort graduation rate within 150% of normal time at 2-year postsecondary public institutions was 29.9%, however, the graduation rate for 2016 for Black men was 19.2% compared to 34.1% for White males (NCES, 2019).

This gap does not suddenly appear in college; it begins much earlier. Male students who are Black are more likely to be denied the opportunity to learn as they move through the K-12 school system while suffering inequitable disciplinary consequences (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Garner, 2017). This treatment can turn Black boys away from

subjects such as fundamental reading, writing, and math in their formative years (Buckingham et al., 2013). Many identified hurdles thwart men of color in their pursuit of higher education; race and color are significant hurdles. Some of these hurdles are encountered before Black boys leave the K-12 system, and it is important to understand what those hurdles are because they impact postsecondary experiences.

K-12 Experience

Black boys encounter certain types of discipline in school that may profoundly affect them for the rest of their lives (Davis, 2017; GAO, 2018; USDEOCR, 2014). As early as preschool, children have been suspended and expelled from school (GAO, 2018). This "push out" phenomenon is especially disquieting because it involves the disproportionate application of expulsions to Black boys (Kohli et al., 2017). Discrimination in K-12 educational policies and practices manifests in the treatment of Black boys by teachers and administrators (Davis, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017). Administrators and teachers use zero-tolerance school discipline policies to create safer learning environments; however, the excuse of short-term safety can translate into long-term punishment for some students, particularly Black boys (Smith & Harper, 2015). For example, Black preschoolers were 3.6 times more likely to receive one or more suspensions than were White preschoolers (GAO, 2018; Nelson, 2020). Equally troubling is that Black children made up only 19% of preschool enrollment, yet they comprised 47% of preschoolers suspended one or more times. Additionally, the study revealed that boys are three times more likely than girls to be suspended at least once (GAO, 2018; Nelson, 2020). This disproportionality continues throughout the K-12 environment, with Black students disproportionately suspended at rates five times or more than their

representation in the student population (Davis, 2017; GAO, 2018; Nelson, 2020). Similarly, Black students were disproportionately expelled at rates five times or more than the overall student population rate (Smith & Harper, 2015).

Disciplinary action taken by administrators and teachers appropriates classroom time away from Black students, which further encumbers their access to a quality education (Bryan, 2017; Davis, 2017). Students who are suspended from school lose necessary instructional time that cannot be reclaimed (Bryan, 2017; Suh et al., 2014). Among eighth graders, those who missed school three or more days in the month before being tested scored between 0.3 and 0.6 standard deviations lower (contingent on total days missed) on the 2015 NAEP mathematics test than those who did not miss any school days. The impact of exclusionary practices can result in the students being less likely to graduate on time, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to drop out of school, and more likely to enter the juvenile justice system (Bryan, 2017; Nelson, 2020). Exclusionary discipline can leave a student with an adverse experience (Bryan, 2017; Suh et al., 2014). The negative experience could leave an emotional scar that mars them for the rest of their lifetime, resulting in individual and societal costs (GAO, 2018; Nelson, 2020). The new racism in K-12 schools is subtle and evasive because it is normalized under the guise of multiculturalism, colorblindness, and the subjective interpretation of policy and practices (Bryan, 2017). According to the United States Government Accountability Office (2015), Black students were particularly overrepresented among students who were suspended from school, received corporal punishment, or had a school-related arrest. While there were approximately 17.4 million more White students

than Black students attending K-12 public schools in 2013-14, about 176,000 more Black students than White students were suspended from school that school year (GAO, 2018). Who gets disciplined and why is multifaceted. Implicit bias on the part of teachers and administrators may cause them to judge students' behaviors differently based on the students' race and ethnicity (Bryan, 2017; Nelson, 2020; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006). Educators who are influenced by stereotypes or unconscious associations about people of color may take actions that impede the learning process for the students who are viewed through this lens (GAO, 2016; Nelson, 2020). This is particularly troubling as teachers and school administrators often have the discretion to make case-by-case decisions about whether to discipline and the form of discipline to impose in response to student behaviors, such as disobedience, defiance, and classroom disruption (Smith & Harper, 2015; USDEOCR, 2014). Certain groups of students are more harshly disciplined than others (USDEOCR, 2014). Studies found that the types of offenses that Black children were punished for were based on school officials' subjective interpretations of behavior (Nelson, 2020; Smith & Harper, 2015; GAO, 2018). Eye-tracking technology showed that, among other things, teachers gazed longer at Black boys than other children (GAO, 2018; Nelson, 2020). The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reported that this research highlighting implicit bias as a contributing factor in school discipline may shed some light on the persistent disparities in expulsion and suspension practices, which result in lost time for academic instruction (GAO, 2018). Equitable treatment for Black boys in K-12 schooling is thwarted because of their skin color or ethnicity (Davis, 2017; Smith & Harper, 2015). The unwarranted attention and harsh disciplinary practices unwittingly construct a forbidding path for Black boys after they leave K-12 school.

Education - from K-12 School to Prison

Some students, specifically Black boys, miss so much instruction early in the K-12 school system that the likely outcome is a pathway from K-12 school to prison (Bryan, 2017; Jones et al., 2018). The school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) encompasses hash discipline and exclusionary practices that disproportionally affect students of color (Bryan, 2017). These oppressive practices waste valuable resources simply because the students may have been misunderstood due to stereotypes about race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Jones et al., 2018). Some suggest that acting out is a cry for help by these students, which teachers and administrators incorrectly diagnose. Schools can serve as a place of refuge away from the anarchy of home life and the peer pressures of the neighborhood some students encounter (Smith & Harper, 2015). Students from disadvantaged and distressed backgrounds reported feeling safe at school because it is an environment away from familial abuse and shame (Smith & Harper, 2015; Jones et al., 2018). Alternative outcomes are possible for these students if different approaches to addressing disruptive behavior were used or if empowered school counselors, psychologists, and social workers addressed the students' mental and physiological health needs (Davis, 2017; Davis, 2015; Jones et al., 2018).

High school dropouts have a higher likelihood of incarceration at some point in their lives (Jones et al., 2018). Two significant factors contribute to the early departure from high school of Black students; the factors are poor institutional climates and instances of racism (Palmer et al., 2014). These factors culminate in racial battle fatigue. Smith-McLallen et al. (2006) describe racial battle fatigue as the racial stereotypes and other forms of denigration that lead to psychological stress among Black students –

experienced as frustration, anger, disappointment, shock, anxiety, helplessness, and fear. Dejectedly, over half of Black boys who attend urban high schools do not earn a diploma, and of dropouts, nearly 60% will go to prison at some point. According to The Sentencing Project (2020), 1 in 3 Black men will be incarcerated at some point in their lives versus 1 in 17 for White men. The NCES reported that in 2014, the American Community Survey (ACS) status dropout rate was 7.9% for Black students compared to 4.4% for White students between 16- to 24-year-olds – students who left school without obtaining a high school credential (Espinosa et al., 2019). The ACS status dropout rate was 6.0% in 2014 for the noninstitutionalized population, which comprises individuals living in households and noninstitutionalized group quarters, such as college and university housing, military quarters, and temporary shelters for the homeless (Espinosa et al., 2019). The institutionalized population, which consists of individuals in adult and juvenile correctional facilities and other health care facilities, had a dropout rate of 33.1% in 2014 (Espinosa et al., 2019). Obstacles Black boys face in their pursuit of education in their formative years often leave them with an accumulation of academic knowledge deemed not college-ready.

College Readiness

Black students are more likely to arrive at colleges needing support in academic skill development (CCCSE, 2014). According to ACT data, students of color are significantly less likely to meet ACT college-readiness benchmarks. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that students of color's ACT scores are considerably less likely to meet the ACT college-readiness benchmarks (NCES, 2020). According to NCES (2020), for 2018, 52% of high school graduates were expected to

take the ACT. In 2018, the average test score was 20.8; Black students scored 16.9, Latino students scored 18.8, and White students scored 22.2.

College readiness for post-secondary education is critical for students' academic performance during their college journey and beyond (CCCSE, 2014). College readiness is critical to gaining an understanding of the connection between engagement and outcomes for men of color in community colleges (McGlynn, 2015). Success in college is strongly related to pre-college academic preparation and achievement and other factors such as family income and parents' education (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). College readiness is defined as the collection of skills, knowledge, and behaviors a high school student possesses upon graduation (CCCSE, 2014; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Furthermore, college readiness is the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a college-level course at a post-secondary institution. Developing these skills is such a critical imperative that the Common Core Standards established a set of shared goals. These goals and expectations culminate in a guide to help students amass the knowledge and skills in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level, prepare them to enter college, graduate, find a career, and navigate life (Common Core Standards, 2013).

College readiness is much more than the results of an entrance exam score; it encompasses academic behaviors, cognitive strategies, high school curriculum, and knowledge about the context of college itself (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Students fail to reach college readiness for non-school-related reasons such as home life, internal confidence, financial literacy, and engagement with other students and educators. Many institutions of higher education verify college readiness by the quality of a student's high

school transcript (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). The more rigorous the high school curriculum is, the greater the probability for the student to enter and finish college (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Other measures can be taken into consideration to assess college readiness. Careful consideration should be given to the possibility of making much more extensive use of the AP examination results (Buckley, 2018). These tests are especially good predictors of four-year graduation rates. However, at present, the general usefulness of AP test scores is reduced somewhat because men of color, specifically Black boys, are still much less likely to take AP tests than are other students (Buckley, 2018).

Community colleges face the prospect of transforming the mindset of incoming Black men who are first-generation and low SES students to create a college-going identity (Huerta et al., 2018). The college-going identity is a human developmental concept that suggests students believe that college is their destination (Huerta et al., 2018). However, creating this identity may be challenging as many Black men who have been treated inequitably by the K-12 system, who are not college-ready, now enter college hoping to succeed.

Race and Color

From K-12 school to college, stereotypes, unconscious bias, and racism have presented men of color as at odds with society (Harris & Wood, 2013). In the United States, stereotypes, unconscious bias, and racism have put men of color, especially Black men, in a position more likely to be punished than any other group. As a result, Black men in the United States are being ignored and are fighting to matter (Harper, 2009; Harris & Wood, 2013). Black men have been portrayed as criminals, irresponsible

fathers, drug addicts, drug dealers, and violent rapists (Harper, 2009). The totality of the negative imagery and messaging reinforces barriers, widening the education and wealth gap for specific individuals merely because education is not color-blind (Smith-McLallen et al., 2006).

Black Men in Community College

In the United States, men of color continue to experience persistent gaps as this underrepresented group endures significant social justice issues (Baber et al., 2015). Research chronicles the ongoing disparate outcomes for underrepresented men of color in post-secondary education, especially Black men (Baber et al., 2015; CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). Black men's enrollment in post-secondary education is at a lower rate than the general population. Amongst the adult population of males 18–24 years old, the college enrollment rate is 33%, compared to 38% for White males (NCES, 2014). Black men disproportionately enroll at community colleges versus universities (Bush & Bush, 2010). The viewpoint of students in and out of the classrooms and their sense of belongingness are major factors as to whether they complete college or not (Booker, 2007; Brooms, 2018; Harris & Wood, 2013). Black Male Initiative (BMI) programs centered on the concept of equity for improving the structural conditions for Black men on campus are one response to increase students' sense of belonging as well as persistence and graduation rates (Baber et al., 2016). Further, involvement on campus through student-centered programming efforts garners sociocultural capital (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2015; Strayhorn & Devita, 2010). Additionally, structured programming helps Black men expand their networks on campus

with peers, faculty, and other institutional agents, which in turn helps them realize the institutional resources available to them (Baber et al., 2016).

The following section of this work describes improved outcomes mediated through capital awareness. This section discusses ways to infuse students with the ingredients for success. Finally, this section discusses the ingredients necessary for success, such as promoting engagement, advising, mentoring, and high expectations.

BMI – The Royal Jelly

Research has shown BMIs are a resource that infuses students with the attributes, the ingredients, to help them establish and strengthen their sense of purpose (Baber et al., 2016; Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Harris & Wood, 2013; Palmer et al., 2014; Wood & Palmer, 2012). Programs of this type can help students develop and obtain the elements they need to be successful - the royal jelly. BMIs aid students by creating smaller micro-communities to reduce the size and complexity of the campus to a more suitable size to make navigation easier (Baber et al.,2016; CCCSE, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2010). These programs foster academic and social integration, student engagement, and a sense of belonging. Theme-based programs, such as BMIs, establish a collective buttressed by slogans (CCCSE, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2010). BMIs help students enhance their capital. According to Baber et al. (2016), helping students access capital can increase their academic motivation (aspirational capital), enrich their peer bonding (familial capital), and help them visualize their college success, which increases their potential for persistence and completion. BMIs counteract racial battle fatigue by providing a safe space for Black men to freely discuss their problems, anxiety, and issues without fear of judgment. The brotherhood

formed within the community established by these programs provides students with resources and information to bolster their confidence and help them successfully navigate issues on and off campus that challenge their persistence (Brooms, 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006). This type of programming is purposed with promoting a brotherhood with the expressed goal to increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of Black men who have been and continue to be overwhelmingly underrepresented in higher education (Brooms, 2018; Harris et al., 2017). An emphasis of the BMI is to develop meaning of the experiences of Black men and provide critical insights into ways to support and enhance integration, academic performances, sense of self, persistence, and completion (Brooms, 2018). BMIs or programs established to aid this minoritized group, provide support to their members in their academic undertakings and create alliances. Faculty and administrators who support these programs function as advocates who work towards improving the students' educational experiences and quality of life at the institution (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018). BMIs work to cultivate environments of success by promoting success through engagement, providing advising, mentoring, and creating high expectations.

Promoting Success through Engagement

Men of color can excel in college when the environment supports their narrative of success as it relates to their families and communities (Brooms et al., 2018). Black men bring various community assets with them to college, which they lean on to help them matriculate and graduate. These men seek opportunities to engage with shared values to aid in racial/ethnic uplift. The narrative that these men bring with them is the framework that they ground themselves in to focus their energy on college aspiration,

performance, and success (Brooms et al., 2018). Dynamic programs are constructed to promote an environment that makes it more comfortable for students to make friends. These programs help students learn about the college and lead to better college experiences (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). Studies confirm that when students surround themselves with other students who have educational aspirations, they obtain support and are empowered to grow, which works to enhance the educational experience (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Patton et al., 2016). Additionally, advising and faculty engagement can give Black men the support they need to persist and graduate. Advising and faculty engagement provide information and guidance. Information is power; this form of energy can infuse Black men with the advice and motivation (Huerta et al., 2018; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Schwebel, 2012).

Advising Helps

Proactive advising encompasses intentional contact with students with the objective of developing a caring and beneficial relationship that leads to increased academic motivation and persistence (Davis, 2015; Roscoe, 2015). Advisors primarily provide foundational information to scaffold advisees' learning experiences to support future growth (Kraft-Terry & Kau, 2019). Proactive advising is action-oriented with the purpose of engaging and motivating students to seek help when needed (Finnie, 2017). Strategic deployment of high-quality, prescriptive advising that includes expertise, awareness of student needs, and structured programs is the desired direct response (Schwebel, 2012). This approach to advising focuses on bringing campus services to the student, rather than passively waiting for the student to identify their own needs; it is designed to create regular ongoing contact with students (Davis, 2015; Finnie, 2017;

Schwebel, 2012). A progressive form of advising utilizes an armament of tools to reach students, which include emails, advising notes, early alerts, mid-term grades, alerts from faculty members, and use of social media (Davis, 2015). These practices help build and foster strong relationships with advisees, which allow advisors the opportunity to be steadfast without being perceived as meddlesome. Proactive advising models lead to better retention and student success in college (Davis, 2015).

Faculty play an important role in academic advising; research shows that they have the most influence on student success (Jones & Hansen, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016). In community colleges, faculty, through their classrooms, have the highest connection with students, tying them to the institution. The proactive and intentional approach to academic advising holistically engages students through a personal relationship with an institution’s advisor (Jones & Hansen, 2014). Like faculty connections, students believed that instructor engagement demonstrated that they cared about the students, this motivated them to work harder (CCCSE, 2014). Proactive advising enhances the students' responsibilities for their educational plans and academic success, strengthens problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities, and allows for early interventions (Finnie, 2017; Jones & Hansen, 2014). An effective advising curriculum is purposely designed to preserve the institution's principal mission and the advising program, while content is scaffolded at multiple levels to facilitate student learning (Kraft-Terry & Kau, 2019). Thus, the role of faculty serves as a critical component of service to the students (Davis, 2015; Jones & Hansen, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Guides to Success

In addition to proactive advising and caring supportive faculty, a good mentoring program can support Black men and yield positive academic outcomes (CCCSE, 2014; Torrens et al., 2017). A mentoring program may help students, especially Black men, feel connected with the college experience (Roscoe, 2015). A mentoring program's functional components should include fostering care, cultivating relationships, and improving academic performance (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013). Mentoring as a concept for developing the next generation of students may produce success in education, personal growth, and a desire for life-long learning (CCCSE, 2014; Torrens et al., 2017). CCCSE (2014) reported that students who participate in support programs have a lower dropout rate. Mentoring programs are considered support programs for college students; these programs may improve student retention and graduation rates. Community colleges are particularly challenged because all prospective students are accepted regardless of their high school academic performance (CCCSE, 2014). Formal mentoring programs can be a powerful retention tool; one powerful strategy deployed was integrating the program with other career exploration and development interventions such as internships and academic student clubs (Eby et al., 2015).

Mentoring is a best practice that promotes student success (CCCSE, 2014; Torrens et al., 2017). Structured mentoring programs encourage a connection with students, which is vital to aiding them in making the decision to remain enrolled at the institution (Roscoe, 2015). Mentoring can take the shape of an informal relationship, a formal relationship, or a combination; it can impact students in other ways, such as promoting networking opportunities, generating personal identity development, and

creating equity (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013). Black men who participated in mentoring programs displayed increased confidence and demonstrated more engagement with faculty and other college personnel (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013). Mentoring works to develop a relationship with the student to reduce uncertainty, provide strategies for dealing with problems, and explain other resources available to enhance academic success (Eby et al., 2015). Black men can achieve success in higher education when the proper support systems are in place; these programs provide students with pathways to integrate into the college experience (CCCSE, 2014; Eby et al., 2015). In addition, a vital element in the guide to success is to have high expectations.

High Expectations

Students believe that high expectations are essential. Students who did not participate in classroom and educational activities and had low expectations felt abandoned and ignored. In contrast, students who had high expectations emphasized the value of being pushed to excel (CCCSE, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016). According to the CCCSE (2014), students felt that the pressure of being pushed to their limit created an internal desire to accept the challenge and even drive themselves harder. Interactions with faculty in the classroom enhanced the student experience (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Male students of color conveyed that their instructors' characteristics and specific behaviors are critical factors in their success (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Men of color believed that instructor excellence is grounded in caring about students, communicating clearly, and being prepared. These elements signaled to the students that the instructor was prepared and cared about them (CCCSE, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Faculty interactions with students of color contribute to student learning (Lundberg et al.,

2018). The most convincing and consistent type of interaction to stimulate learning for students was the faculty providing feedback. Faculty feedback encouraged students to toil harder to meet faculty expectations (CCCSE, 2014; Lundberg et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Likewise, when students viewed faculty members as available, helpful, and sympathetic, they reported more significant learning gains (CCCSE, 2014; Lundberg et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2016). The combination of availability and high expectations on the part of faculty leads to learning (Lundberg et al., 2018). Faculty as institutional agents can increase student outcomes when the programs and services function to provide feedback to students in a way that motivates them (Harris III et al., 2017). Programs designed with faculty engagement may serve as cultural translators, mediators, and models to improve learning for Black men by increasing accessibility to teaching faculty (Harris III et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

This next section of this chapter introduces obstacles to success faced by Black men. This section brings attention to socioeconomic status. Furthermore, it explains the different classes and how it impacts the individual. Also, the chapter touches on food insecurity and homelessness.

Obstacles to Success

Socioeconomic status (SES) has an enormous impact on the success of Black men who attend college (Harris & Woods, 2013; Kwate & Goodman, 2015). The linkage between social inequality and educational achievement is a conduit for which childhood social disadvantage may lead to lower levels of educational attainment (Fergusson et al., 2008). Students from low SES backgrounds have lower educational aspirations,

persistence rates, and educational accomplishments compared to their peers from high SES settings (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Walpole, 2003).

Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group; it is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. In terms of the definition for this study, SES denotes the position of individuals, families, households, or other aggregates on one or more measurements of stratification (Eby, 2015; Fergusson et al., 2008). These measurements include income, education, prestige, wealth, or other aspects of standing that members of society deem relevant. Parents' life choices influenced by their social, emotional, mental, physical, and educational environment are filtered into their children; SES is indirectly permeated into their offspring through proximity (Fergusson et al., 2008).

Low SES households present disadvantages for students to a successful college transition. Students who are from low SES families display lower academic motivation (Sledge, 2016). One's academic ability is influenced by social origins and, to some extent, the environment (Fergusson et al., 2008; Sledge, 2016). Financial stress is another defining characteristic of low SES households, which disproportionately impacts Black students (Fergusson et al., 2008). Individuals living in a low SES household are less likely to gain access to post-secondary education than individuals from high SES households (Fergusson et al., 2008). Low SES parents are more likely to use negative and harsh strategies to deal with parent-adolescent relationships whereas high SES families are more likely to furnish a cognitively stimulating home facilitating the development of intrinsic academic motivation (Fergusson et al., 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010; Vasquez et al., 2019). As a result, the levels of educational attainment decline markedly with

declining SES (Fergusson et al., 2008). High SES parents encourage their children to question the world around them, which leads to their children asking questions and seeking answers. High SES parents devote more effort to encouraging academic success among their children than their low SES counterparts (Fergusson et al., 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). These parents create a home environment with an emphasis on learning opportunities and stimulating activities conducive to exploration and scholastic endeavors (Sledge, 2016). While low SES students are disadvantaged, furthering their education can help them make wiser choices that could facilitate social mobility (Fergusson et al., 2008; Walpole, 2003).

A person's SES plays a significant role in their ability to progress through the educational system (Kwate & Goodman, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019). In particular, low SES and racism contribute to poor health among men of color (Kwate & Goodman, 2015). Students from low SES households tend to experience other economic and academic barriers due to biases embedded in educational institutions; poor health and lack of resources lead to struggles with college persistence (Vasquez et al., 2019). Postsecondary education is viewed as a critical asset for improving long-term occupational and economic outcomes. Individuals having earned a college degree are deemed to have secured a vital resource to help one move away from poverty (Bailey et al., 2005). Individuals with low educational attainment are linked to higher unemployment rates, lower earnings, and higher levels of poverty. Students from low SES families are less likely than those from families with a higher SES to obtain higher levels of postsecondary education (Bailey et al., 2005).

By 2012, the levels of education of 2002 10th graders varied by SES. In terms of achievement, 7% of low SES students compared to 3% for middle SES had not completed high school (NCES, 2014). By 2012, 21% of students classified as low SES students identified completing high school as their highest level of education compared to 13% and 3% for middle SES and high SES students, respectively. Additionally, the associate degree completion rate for low SES students was 8% compared to 10% and 7% for middle SES and high SES, respectively. Further, 14% of low SES students, 29% of middle SES, and 60% of high SES students earned a Bachelor or higher (NCES, 2014). Thus, the higher the degree, the lower the success rate is for low SES students. One reason is because low SES students face a real chance of being homeless.

Due to struggling financially, low SES students more often struggle with homelessness (Henry et al., 2020). Shelter is a basic human need without which a person cannot strive to address other desires. Homelessness is considered the harshest case of poverty; it can be transitional, periodic, chronic, or any combination caused by some personal struggle (Henry et al., 2020; Vang et al., 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019;). Homelessness is one of society's most significant challenges (Vasquez et al., 2019). Homelessness is not a coveted culture; the problem is a result of the continuous disruption in the familial environment, generally created by phenomena such as disasters, poverty, wars, civil movement, disease, and death of a relative, which leads to displacement (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). The inability to secure basic needs is associated with poor academic outcomes (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

A high percentage of men of color experience housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Vang et al., 2017). Studies show that Black men's

concerns about a stable living environment included housing challenges ranging from eviction concerns to couch surfing to homelessness (De La Garza et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2017). In a Point-in-Time (PIT), on a night in January 2019, 567,715 people in the U.S. experienced homelessness; with approximately two-thirds (63%) staying in sheltered locations, and one-third (37%) remaining unsheltered – living on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in other places not suitable for human habitation (Henry et al., 2020). People living in poverty are more likely to become homeless and food insecure (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). Homelessness has been associated with declines in achievement within secondary education. A lack of stable housing also influences youth's transition into adulthood, and ultimately post-secondary outcomes (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Moreover, approximately 40% of homeless adults do not have a high school diploma, and less than 2% have a post-secondary degree (Tierney & Sablan, 2014).

Low SES students also often struggle with hunger. Food insecurity is a significant barrier for college students with academic and social implications (Balaam, 2019; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018). In the U.S., food insecurity is explained as constrained economic resources rather than dieting, fasting, illness, or similar explanations. Food insecurity is consistently associated with financial uncertainty, poor health, and adverse academic outcomes (Bruening et al., 2017). Students at post-secondary educational institutions reported their apprehensions about food insecurity and expressed frustration about the lack of reliable access to safe and healthy foods. Studies show that the lack of consistent access to safe and healthy foods can lead to higher stress, anxiety, and poorer academic outcomes (Bruening et al., 2017; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018).

Many men of color in community colleges are exposed to food insecurity (Vang et al., 2017). Men of color continuously face the challenge of uncertainty regarding how to secure their next meal. A crisis of this magnitude adds additional stress that further exacerbates other aspects of their lives, such as their academic pursuit (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Vang et al., 2017). Food insecurities disproportionately impact marginalized students, and 54% of the community college respondents identified as Black indicated that they were food insecure (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2020). Food insecurity is more acute in community colleges, where a high percentage of students are from low-income and first-generation backgrounds (Vang et al., 2017). Like food insecurity and homelessness, individuals of low SES have difficulty in their educational pursuits.

Thus far, this chapter has addressed the pertinent literature that supports this study. The next section of this report describes the theoretical underpinning used to conduct this study. The theoretical underpinning was essential as it affixed my attention on my research questions, the purpose, the problem, and the significance of the study (Allen et al., 2016).

Theoretical Underpinning

A theoretical underpinning is a collection of interrelated concepts used for understanding, analyzing, and designing ways to investigate and support the research (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The socio-ecological model (SEM) is the theoretical underpinning adopted for this study that helped capture the experiences and perceptions of Black men who participate in the MOCI. The SEM is a theory-based framework for understanding human development introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1981). The SEM

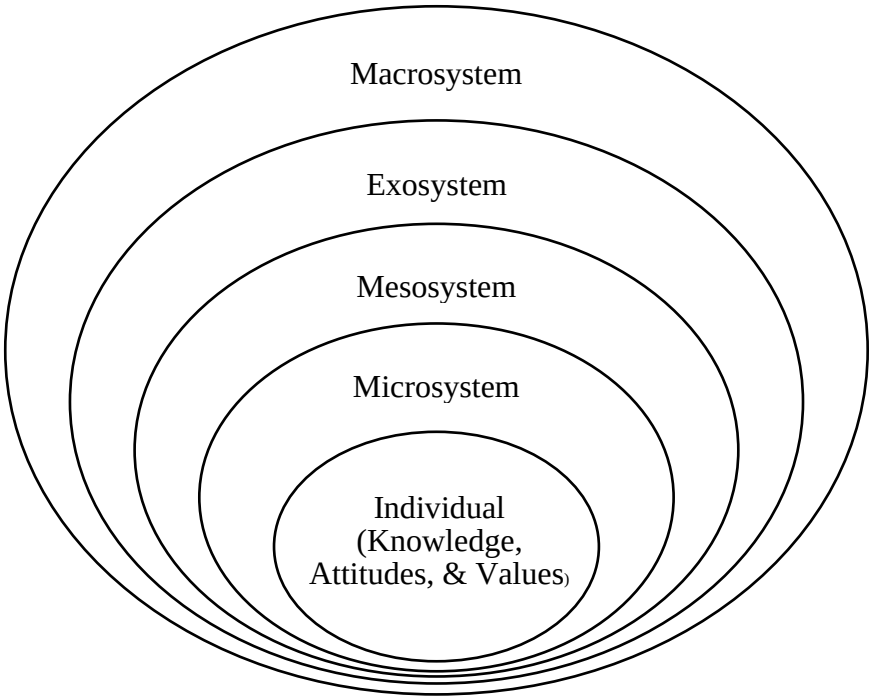
helped provide insight into the multifaceted and interactive effects the MOCI had on personal and environmental factors (Allen et al., 2016). The SEM investigates human development according to the individual or group environment; this may incorporate the MOCI, community, or collective society and the period in which they live (Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The SEM enabled me to frame the analysis and demonstrate the ways in which multiple systems influenced Black men (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). This qualitative study explored how Black men in the MOCI made meaning of their lived experiences. This underpinning provided a structure illustrated by nesting circles that places the individual in the center surrounded by various systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The SEM is easily adopted to help explain other social science phenomena involving the interactions of the individual and the environment and the subsequent impact on perceptions and attitudes. The adapted version for this study allowed for the investigation of the environments of Black men through semi-structured interviews to more fully understand the factors that influenced their decision-making. Using the SEM explained how the sense of school belonging and connectivity could be improved with appropriate and accessible resources at secondary schools (Allen et al., 2016). In a research project conducted in North Carolina to understand the disproportionate minority contact using the SEM, researchers drew attention to macro-level factors such as racism and how individual attitudes and behaviors may be influenced to promote change (Henderson & Baffour, 2015). Another study using Bronfenbrenner's SEM was adapted for a school-based study regarding developing students' social-emotional skills; the study showed that promoting positive student outcomes, including students with emotional and behavioral problems (EBP), can help set the stage for greater success in the classroom (Trach et al.,

2018). Thus, the SEM is an adaptive yet sophisticated model that can aid researchers in obtaining deep insight into the phenomena being studied and provide a pathway for additional research or a solution.

The SEM adopted for this research involves five systems. The illustration below, figure 1, provides a graphic depiction of the model.

Figure 1

Social-Ecological Model



The student, the individual is the core system. The second system is the closest system surrounding the individual is the microsystem or interpersonal system, which contains the strongest influences on the interactions and relationships of the immediate surroundings (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The mesosystem, or institutional

level, is the third system, and looks beyond immediate interactions. The fourth system, the exosystem or community, impacts the individual indirectly through positive and negative interactive forces (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The fifth and last system, the macrosystem or policy tier, involves generalized ideology (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Individual

The individual, the circle in the center, encompasses the individual's knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and values. The individual, the core, reflects the individual's ability and priorities (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The tier or system closest to the individual is the microsystem.

Microsystem

The microsystem or interpersonal is the system or tier closest to the individual, which depicts the structures that have direct contact with the student – the individual. The microsystem encompasses the student's relationships and interactions with his immediate surroundings, such as family, friends, instructors, and the MOCI. This system functions in two directions; it is the most influential and has the most meaningful impression on the individual. This system represents the student's core surrounding for learning about the world. Interrelations with the family provide the individual with lived experience, and it is where the individual learns to trust and care (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Mesosystem

The mesosystem or institutional tier connects two or more systems – a byproduct of interactions among layers. This tier involves active connectivity regarding relationships in work, neighborhood, college, and church. While the MOCI is within the

college, I make a separate distinction by including the MOCI in the Microsystem because the MOCI provides more information and personal interactions with the student than the more formal, at large, college relationship. The system extends whenever the developing person moves into a new setting (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). These affiliates offer engagement that can provide very significant benefits towards the individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Exosystem

The exosystem or community depicts a social system where the individual is not an active participant. This tier represents the level that impacts the student's development; there is interaction with some elements of the other systems. The individual may not be directly engaged at this level, but he encounters positive or negative feelings from interactions; such areas include societal standards and norms. Even though the individual lacks direct contact with this system, it impacts his life (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the larger cultural context; it encompasses aspects like attitudes and social conditions – local, state, and national laws and policies. The macrosystems represent the social setting of various societal groups such as SES, ethnic groups, race, or religious affiliations. This system is the outermost layer in the student's environment—the cascading influences of the macrosystem sway interactions of the other systems (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The macrosystem that encircles us helps hold us together (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Interaction Among the Different Systems

The SEM underpinning effectively made connections between the MOCI and the participants' life experiences. This underpinning enabled me to comprehend the multi-layered social system and learn how the individual interacted within the system and the effects of the system on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). Black men face different factors and determinants during their pursuit of higher education: proactive intervention, engagement, and mentoring are effective tools for creating positive change (Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Eby et al., 2015; Tinto, 1997; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). Using the SEM to view all systems made it possible to understand the influence in one system to create a cascade to the others. Understanding the lived experiences of Black men as explained by the individuals was vital to generate recommendations that create positive change (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). Thus, an understanding of the multiple systems of the model was essential to offer the best recommendations for action.

The application of the SEM as a practical strategy in framing the phenomena of this study necessitated the use of qualitative inquiry to explain how macro-level systems influenced both meso- and micro-level behavior and attitudes (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The SEM as the theoretical underpinning helped inform design and analysis. As a result, the underpinning guided the study's methodology, from the selection of participants to the strategy selected to generate findings (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015).

Summary

The educational journey of some Black men is full of obstacles. This chapter provided insight into the lived lives of Black men in grade school, high school, college,

and points in between. A long-standing gap in persistence and college completion measures separating Black men from other student groups continues to widen (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Williams & Flores-Ragade, 2010). Early in a Black boy's life, he faces certain types of discipline in school that may profoundly affect him for the rest of his life (GAO, 2018). This may lead to so much lost instruction early in the K-12 school system that the outlook becomes dreary (Jones et al., 2018). Because of these and other obstacles, these students are more likely to arrive at colleges needing support in academic skill development (CCCSE, 2014). Even though Black men have these obstacles before them, they enter college with high expectations, which is essential. Students who had high expectations accentuated the value of being pushed to achieve (CCCSE, 2014). BMIs and MOCIs infuse students with the ingredients to establish and strengthen their sense of purpose - the royal jelly (Baber et al., 2016; Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Harris & Wood, 2013; Palmer et al., 2010; Wood & Palmer, 2012).

The work to be conducted was built on Bronfenbrenner's (1981) SEM underpinning for understanding human development. The literature review framed the objectives of this study, which is to explore the perceptions of and experiences of the participants in the MOCI as it relates to their pursuit of academic success. The following contains the methodology of this qualitative research study. Chapter III includes an explanation of the selected method, the research questions, the research design, the process for selecting participants, the data collection methods, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and the context of the researcher.

Chapter III

Methodology

Chapter III presents the methodology and the research design used to conduct this study. This chapter is arranged in nine sections to explain the work in specific detail. In the first section, I provide a restatement of the purpose of the study. The following second section is a restatement of the research questions. The third section describes the research design. As we move into the fourth section of this chapter, I address the context of the researcher of this study. In the fifth section, I describe the setting and sampling. In the sixth section, I make a case for the data collection method used to complete the work. The seventh section describes how the data analysis was performed. As I move to the end of this chapter, the eighth section highlights the issues of trustworthiness. Finally, in the ninth section, I provide a summary of the material covered.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Black men who participate in the MOCI at a community college on the East Coast. My study was conducted using phenomenological research. This design incorporated the use of qualitative interview data to understand the phenomenon through the individual's lived experience to obtain a holistic view of the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021). This chapter provides the rationale of the design, setting, selection of participants, procedures, data collection, and methods of establishing validity and trustworthiness.

Research Questions

The study explored the Black participants' perceptions of and experiences with the MOCI program. Specifically, the research questions used to guide this study are as follows:

1. How do Black men describe their experiences in the MOCI program?
2. Why do Black men participate in the MOCI?
3. In what ways can the MOCI be helpful or improved?

Research Design

Qualitative research was used to understand this phenomenon at a deeper level (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A qualitative research design for studying Black men who participated in the enhanced programming was appropriate for understanding their experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hannon et al., 2016; Peoples, 2021; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In addition, this methodology allowed me to capture information to present a rich and detailed profile of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021; Young et al., 2009). This methodology was used to explore and generate an understanding of the essence of the meaning students attached to the program (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in a natural setting to derive meaning through an interpretive, emergent process that utilizes both inductive and deductive logic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative design used in this study was essential for discovering a "pattern of meaning" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8).

I used a phenomenological method for this study, which is particularly suited for understanding the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018;

Moustakas, 1994; Young et al., 2009). Lived experiences in this work apply to experiences as described by each participant of this study (Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021). Lived experience is the beginning and ending point of phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is a research design that accentuates the participants' experiences and interpretations of the world (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological research encapsulates the phenomenon, abstaining from any assumed framework to remain fact-based (Groenwald, 2004). This method provided the necessary framework for conducting the study as I investigated how participants described and perceived their experiences in the program and the meaning they assigned to those experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Thus, I was able to construct meanings and form interpretations to understand what participants experienced to answer the research questions of this study.

The specific phenomenological method deployed was Transcendental, and the design incorporates bracketing to aid with inquiry (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Young et al., 2009). Transcendental Phenomenology research anticipated and provided a way to account for the researcher's objectivity to obtain an unbiased description of the raw data. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Young et al., 2009). Thus, I used this platform to look beyond the unique part of a person's experience that varies from person to person to discover common meanings of the particular group to get to the essence of those shared meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021). In capturing the participants' essence, I bracketed my personal bias.

Bracketing, also called epoché, is a fundamental concept of phenomenology (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is a crucial methodological step in

phenomenological studies; it helped me set aside my preconceived beliefs, assumptions, and biases (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Using bracketing, I was able to approach the study with an open mind without personal biases that could have influenced the interpretation of participants' experiences. The method helped capture the verbally elucidated experiences conveyed to me by the participants to help me avoid imposing external interpretations (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Thus, bracketing helped me suspend judgment, enabling me to focus on presenting the participants' experiences in their purest form (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Actively engaging in bracketing increased the validity of my findings because the technique made it less likely to interpret data in a way that aligned with my beliefs. I deployed bracketing before data collection and during the analysis of the interview transcriptions to ensure I remained vigilant to guard against allowing my perceptions to influence the elements identified in the participant data (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021).

This transcendental phenomenological study was conducted by focusing on what the participants of the study have in common to construct the meaning of the event studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Parks, 2021; Peoples, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Young et al., 2009). Phenomenology called for me to obtain individuals' experiences and shared realities to identify common themes to evaluate the individual perceptions of Black men who participated in the MOCI. Thus, transcendental phenomenological research matched this paradigm well (Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021; Peoples, 2021). One reason for using transcendental phenomenological research is that it is aligned with the research questions and literature review assembled to capture the essence of the experiences of this study's participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994;

Parks, 2021). Another reason for selecting this method is that it provided the structure most suitable and flexible enough to conduct the work (Baber et al., 2016; CCSSE, 2014; Peoples, 2021; Smith & Harper, 2015). Finally, this method helped me logically interpret the theory-supported findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Parks, 2021; Moustakas, 1994).

As explained earlier, I used bracketing to suspend my beliefs about the phenomenon during the study (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Parks, 2021; Peoples, 2021). The bracketing process was iterative. Bracketing (epoché) is one form of bracketing. Another form of bracketing is reflexivity. Reflexivity bracketing was a journey of preparation, action, evaluation, and systematic feedback about the effectiveness of the process (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing encouraged reflexivity which involved self-awareness demonstrated in this work as I used my role in the study and the impact of my personal experiences to interpret the data rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate it.

Transparency was apparent using epoché and reflexivity bracketing by helping readers assess my potential impact on the study (Moustakas, 1994; Gearing, 2004; Parks, 2021). My data review was conducted in three stages. The first stage required that I reveal and identify my suppositions as part of this proposal to diminish interference in the study before collecting data. The second stage involved the revelation and identification of my suppositions to reduce interference in the study before data collection in application to the analysis stage of the research. Again, the second stage involved identifying my suppositions to reduce interference in the study before collecting data in application to the analysis stage of the research. The third phase required reintegration,

unbracketing the safeguard against my personal beliefs to avoid influencing the research (Gearing, 2004). The third phase allowed for my personal beliefs and feelings, which were suppressed in epoché to be synthesized to help interpret my conclusions (Gearing, 2004). In each of the three stages, I identified my interest in the topic and explained what I might have taken for granted (Ahern, 1999). Furthermore, I reviewed my values as it related to the research questions; this was useful during data analysis. I acknowledged my feelings to remain neutral; this included avoiding situations that could have created positive or negative emotions or feelings or created a sense of guilt or disengagement (Ahern, 1999). Lastly, I encapsulated my bracketing efforts in an analytic memorandum for each stage (Ahern, 1999; Gearing, 2004).

Context of the Researcher

As the researcher using qualitative inquiry, I was the lens through which this study was conducted, the vital instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). So, it was essential for me to acknowledge my personal assumptions as these could have influenced the research inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). Hence, I provided a little background about myself as it relates to this study to give the readers insight into possible biases.

Currently, I am a student at Rowan University in pursuit of a Doctor of Educational Leadership degree. I am a Black man born in the Midwest, where I spent most of my formative years. I grew up in a middle-class family and was the firstborn of four children in a two-parent family in a suburban community. My educational experience after high school began with enlisting in the U.S. Army, where I traveled and lived in multiple states. While serving in the Army, I lived in Germany for over two

years. During my time in the military, I took college courses affiliated with the City Colleges of Chicago. After receiving an honorable discharge from the military, I began work on my bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting in 1989. After earning my bachelor's degree, I entered the workforce in the private sector, where I worked for over eight years. During my tenure in the private sector, I worked for two fortune 500 companies. I experienced some successes and received several promotions during my time in the private sector. However, I realized that my upward mobility was capped without additional education. Therefore, I returned to school in 1996 to earn a master's degree in business administration (MBA) with a concentration in finance. As I continued with my professional development, I realized that education opened doors so that I could achieve my objectives. The positive rewards I experienced by obtaining more education created a desire to work for an institution of higher education.

My higher educational career began in 2001 at a community college where I served as the college controller. I went on to be a vice president of finance and administration for several institutions in multiple states. Now, as a community college practitioner with many years of experience, I am even more sensitive to the importance of this phenomenon. The defining encounter that led me to study Black men's perceptions and experiences began almost four years ago with a conversation with the college president and the executive vice president of academic affairs. They explained that a professor, a White male who championed and started the MOCI at the college, was soon to retire. I was asked to take a leadership role in the program – to engage him before he left to learn about the initiative. I accepted the challenge and began to do research about

MOCIs. In my deep dive into the scholarship of MOCIs and BMIs, I discovered interesting and unsettling findings. As I learned more about this subject matter to understand MOCIs and BMIs better, and consequently, searching for a dissertation topic, this naturally became my topic for study. In my review of the scholarship, I saw myself and discovered some differences and wondered why. I became much more sensitive to the racial disparities in education, specifically as it relates to Black men, through this research and my coursework at Rowan University; it led to deep reflections and even more profound questions. Thus, my research questions reflect my intellectual and personal growth on this topic and my desire to answer these questions.

Setting and Sampling

The study occurred at a public, urban-serving community college on the East Coast. The institution serves a predominantly minority student population; it is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Also, the people served by the community college are highly diverse in terms of the non-traditional and low-income student population. Black or African Americans account for 10.9% of the student population. The community college has multiple campus locations, each under the leadership of the college president. The college president answers to a ten-member board of trustees.

The sample size is dictated by the design used; this qualitative study included interviews with seven participants as appropriate for this phenomenological study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In-depth interviews with a small number of people provide the best knowledge for which analytic, inductive, and exploratory studies can gain an understanding of the happening being studied (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Groenwald, 2004; Saunders & Townsend, 2016). The inclusion criteria for the participants are Black

men who were or are enrolled at the community college and who participated in the MOCI. The MOCI is composed of men who self-identify as men of color. Race and gender are essential as they are significant elements in understanding the unique experiences of Black men within the context of the community college environment (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). These individuals are the best source of data to address this study's research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The sampling technique used in this study is purposeful sampling (Moustakas, 1994). Purposeful sampling is standard in qualitative research for the classification and selection of information-rich instances related to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021). Additionally, purposeful sampling is appropriate for the selection of Black men who have stories to tell about their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection Methods

The data collection phase of this project began by assembling information from various sources (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Parks, 2021; Saldaña, 2016). Qualitative research entailed gathering data in the field where the phenomenon exists (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I gathered data for this study by conducting interviews using semi-structured questions, making audio recordings of the interviews, observing the participant's behaviors during the interview, creating a transcription of each session, taking field notes, and writing analytic memorandums (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I deployed an interview protocol instrument to record data from the personal interview of the seven participants (Appendix) (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Groenwald,

2004; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interviews were conducted either in person or virtually, based on the participant's comfort level, to address concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Recording the interviews was incredibly useful for capturing quotes accurately while actively focusing on the dialogue (Saldaña, 2016). During the interview, careful attention was taken to observe behavioral changes and other social or environmental factors that added insight into my study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The collection of data in a real-life setting was essential to understand the phenomenon. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions with the participants – asking prepared open-ended questions followed by probing questions. My interviews generated rich, insightful details that helped make sense of the complex, realized experiences of the participants (Saunders & Townsend, 2016). In-depth interviews generated new knowledge and new understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Additionally, the interviews led to improved insight into the social conditions of the participants' lives (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

It was essential to record my thoughts, reflect on the process, and focus on the objective. Therefore, I created analytic memorandums to record my thoughts. The wisdom of writing and reviewing my analytic memorandums aided in the discovery and generated a better understanding of information through informed hunches, intuition, and serendipitous occurrences that led to a richer explanation of the happening studied (Saldaña, 2016). My analytic memorandums recorded different narratives regarding the interface between the participant data, my interpretation, and other thoughts regarding the work. Furthermore, the analytic memorandums disclosed how my process of inquiry

came together; and revealed the emergent patterns, categories, themes, and concepts derived from my data (Saldaña, 2016). I used the analytic memorandums to capture my private and personal conversations with myself to provide my reflections before, during, and about the entire body of work (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016).

I generated a collection of field notes during my study. Field notes are a collection of documents that reflect my observed experiences in the environment where the study was conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Clifford, 2019; Saldaña, 2016). I created field notes for each interview with the participants of this study. During the engagements I paid careful attention to details such aspects as the physical setting, what the interviewee wore, the interviewee's mannerisms during the interview, and general disposition; in other words, did the participant appear to be happy, sad, distracted, etcetera (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, my field notes captured the date, time, and location of each interview (Saldaña, 2016).

The field notes for this study were generated in the order in which the observations occurred. Additionally, I recorded my relationship to the setting and the participant in which the interview was observed (Clifford, 2019; Saldaña, 2016). A detailed record of my observations helped me recall the things I observed, something said, or a happening during the session (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, the field notes provided further insight for my analysis, triggered by the carefully captured written details of the individual face-to-face engagements (Clifford, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). After each interview, I wrote notes; this analysis included potential emergent themes (Clifford, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). While still in the field, the early revelations enhanced my inquiry with the remaining participants

and guided me to follow up with the previous participants to get clarification (Clifford, 2019; Saldaña, 2016).

Data Analysis Methods

All lived experience descriptions serve as data (Allen et al., 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis aimed to interpret Black men's descriptions of their lived experiences (Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994). The data analysis involved three vital steps; the first step of data analysis started with reading and rereading the individual transcripts to obtain an understanding of the general overall meaning of the experience and the interview (Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016). In this stage, the objective involved flagging words or phrases that highlight the meaning of the experience and then writing a summary of each interview (Saldaña, 2016). The second step involved reading to determine meaning units and clustering initial thematic meanings (Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994). The third step consisted of determining the thematic structure of participant experiences; thus, I created a set of themes for each participant. After considerable review, which involved reorganizing themes, a return to each transcript was necessary to confirm my understanding (Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994). After the data analysis was completed, work began to synthesize the themes into a coherent understanding and then compare them to the literature review to see if the global themes accurately reflected the participants' essence (Hannon et al., 2016, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Due diligence was carried out to ensure that data collection was valid. In phenomenology, the researcher engages the participants in a multidimensional dialog to

understand and thus validate the phenomenon as described (Moustakas, 1994). The study included meticulous descriptions of participants' experiences so readers could view the findings as credible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021; Young et al., 2009). A continual reexamination of my perceptions and biases took place during them development (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). After each transcription, I evaluated what I learned and reviewed my transcriptions, analytic memorandums, and field notes throughout the development of my study (Moustakas, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative research uses different approaches to ensure trustworthiness; these include member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Member checking was used for this dissertation to ensure trustworthiness. Member checking is the process that calls for research participants to be used as additional members of the research team to provide a check of the data collection results (Moustakas, 1994). The participants were provided with a copy of the interview transcript from recorded interviews to verify (Moustakas, 1994). The student participants were emailed a copy and asked to provide comments within 48 hours. Two participants responded, actively participating in the dissertation research validation process to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the study's findings. Their engagement provided feedback that corroborated the study's findings regarding the transformative impact of supportive environments on the educational experiences of Black men. Their active engagement contributed to the validity and rigor of this dissertation and pointed to the importance of incorporating other perspectives in academic research. Providing the participants with an opportunity to review the information ensured the participants' stories remain the focus of the data (Hannon et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

There is a great deal of research regarding programming designed to help Black men excel academically in higher education, but more needs to be done regarding the lived experiences of Black men who attend urban community colleges. The work that I performed focuses on understanding the essence of the lived experiences of students who participated in the MOCI at an urban community college to answer my research questions. The emphasis of my study is on the meaning of shared human experience (Moustakas, 1994). This chapter restated the purpose of the study, restated the research questions, research design, the context of the researcher, setting and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness. As explained in this chapter, I used transcendental phenomenology to capture the participants' lived experiences to analyze the data to understand the meaning of their human experience as it related to participating in the MOCI (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter IV

Data and Analysis

The purpose of Chapter IV is to provide the findings pertaining to the perceptions and experiences of Black men who participated in a community college MOCI. This phenomenological study presents findings intended to explain the shared lived experiences of Black men who participated in the study using their own words to construct meaning (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology identifies the uniqueness of experiences as people live through them to capture the essence of the shared happening (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers use this methodology to gain knowledge about others' experiences with a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The chapter is broken into five sections to help guide the reader through the work. The first section describes the bracketing, collection, and analysis process used to capture the experiences expressed through the participants' voices collected from the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). The following section, or the second section, briefly introduces each participant. The third section presents the themes constructed from the analysis of the interview data. The fourth section explains the essence of this important work. Finally, the fifth section of the chapter concludes with a summary of the information shared in this chapter.

Bracketing, Data Collection, and Analysis

Bracketing (Epoché)

Bracketing, also called epoché, is a fundamental concept of phenomenology. Bracketing requires the researcher to set aside all preconceived beliefs, assumptions, and biases to investigate the phenomenon (Gearing, 2004). The purpose of bracketing is to

suspend judgment and bracket out any influences that could distort the understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Gearing, 2004). I deployed bracketing before data collection and during the analysis of the interview transcriptions to ensure I remained vigilant to guard against allowing my perceptions to influence the elements identified in the participant data. Before beginning the study, I constructed questions designed to generate an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the study participants free of my personal biases. I documented my expected outcomes in an analytical memorandum to aid in personal reflection to avoid compromising the data collected during the interviews. The bracketing approach helped me avoid asking leading questions, which could have influenced the outcome of my study. Using the bracketing strategy helped me hone in on the participants' described perceptions and experiences without altering the data analysis by unintentionally incorporating my experiences and beliefs. Documenting my thoughts and feelings toward the expected outcome helped me identify themes generated from the study's data analysis. The strategy deployed demonstrates my efforts to set aside my biases during interviewing and coding.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted at an east coast public, urban-serving community college. The institution serves a predominantly minority student population and is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution. This qualitative study involved the collection of data from the interviews of seven participants. The inclusion criteria for the participants were Black men who were or are enrolled at the community college and who participated in the MOCI. The study involved interviewing seven participants using in-

depth semi-structured open-ended questions to gather knowledge for a deeper understanding of their experiences (Crouch & McKenzie et al., 2006).

During the interviews, the participants repeatedly referred to three terms which require a brief exploration. The terms are the leadership team, workshops, and men's night out. In this study, the participants frequently referenced the leadership team. The leadership team is composed of individuals dedicated to the development and day-to-day operations of the MOCI. The leadership composition consists of a dean who teaches courses at the college, a program manager who teaches as a part-time adjunct, the program director, and a member of the administration.

Additionally, the participants talked about workshops and men's night out. The workshops are weekly structured programs that are topic specific. The programs occurred on the same day and time and were conducted weekly. The agenda included topics such as completing a FAFSA; banking and personal budgets; accessing student resources such as tutoring, career services, and counseling; time management; emotional intelligence; and mental health. The men's night out is an event that occurs several times per semester in the evening when the students leave campus to enjoy new experiences. The events were structured to introduce the students to a place or event outside of their ordinary day-to-day experiences – it is a bonding activity – some MOCI events involved attending professional hockey games, basketball games at a four-year institution, bowling, etc. The interview protocol instrument provided the structure to conduct the in-person and virtual interviews. The setting, in-person or virtual, was established according to each participant's comfort level to address any concerns regarding COVID-19. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data collection process took several months to

conduct and transcribe the interviews. I took notes in the field to capture the setting and attitude of the participant. Also, I created an analytic memorandum to document my thoughts at the time of the interviews. At the conclusion of each interview, I analyzed the data collected and captured my initial thoughts in an analytic memorandum; I repeated this process for each interview and concluded with the seventh study participant.

I analyzed and interpreted the data collected in this study using the thematic analysis approach described by Moustakas (1994). The data analysis began by using the participants' fully transcribed interviews. The first read of each interview was to reintroduce myself to the experiences described by the participants. My second reading took place; each interview transcription was reread to create a list and preliminary grouping of all relevant expressions of the experiences or moments experienced by each participant (Moustakas, 1994). The theme identification from this read involved color-coding words and phrases on the transcription. Then, I set aside the results for later analysis. I conducted the third review, which involved reading unmarked transcriptions and writing words and phrases on yellow Post-it notes of repeated or prominent words or phrases. These results were set aside for later review. My fourth read entailed reading unmarked transcriptions of each interview to identify all relevant expressions of the experiences again; this was an iterative process. Repeated words and phrases identified were typed into an Excel file. I used various mediums to view the data from various contexts. As stated, this was an iterative process. Also, it was necessary for me to read the analytic memorandums and listen to some of the interviews again to confirm that the transcriptions were accurate. The second stage involved taking the results from those readings to organize words, expressions, and phrases. The reorganization of the

expressions and phrases was also an iterative process. Finally, the third stage of the analysis involved reintegration, unbracketing the safeguard against my personal beliefs to avoid influencing the research (Gearing, 2004). The third phase allowed for my personal beliefs and feelings, which were suppressed in epoché to be synthesized to help interpret my conclusions (Gearing, 2004). In each of the three stages, I reviewed my values as it related to analyzing and rearranging those expressions and phrases to create themes that accurately captured the essence of the participants' experiences. The process focused on seeking overlapping, repetitive, and dominant expressions to write a description of what the participants experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

The next section of this chapter provides a brief introduction to the participants. The participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities. The summary introduces the participants by their pseudonyms; it goes on to give their age and enrollment status. Also, the summary explains why the student decided to attend the community college, as explained by the study participant. Lastly, the introduction provides a snapshot of their perceived demeanor at the start of the interview, according to field notes recorded at the time of the interview.

About the Participants

Participant One

Mr. Washington is a 20-year-old student who joined the college in 2021 and needs 38 credits to graduate. He comes from a single-parent household. There are four family members in the home. He declared his major to be an associate in science in Computer Science. Mr. Washington decided to attend the community college because of the state's tuition-free program. Mr. Washington said,

> Um, well my decision was easy because I am a part of the… [state scholarship] program … where I have to attend two years at community college and my next two year at a four-year will be free in tuition, so this made the most sense.

Mr. Washington described his competing thoughts about attending the community college. Mr. Washington said, "um before I came here there was a lot of talks about it being the thirteenth grade, in a way it is like that and in a lot of ways it is definitely … more to it." Mr. Washington talked about his approach to entering college saying,

> I expected um … [to] procrastinate less, I expected less um because the guidelines not the guidelines the due dates, there is less time that I have to do assignments because the assignments are due the next the next following day instead of the week following week. Yeah, less time to complete work, harder work.

Mr. Washington talked about focusing on being efficient. He said, "In a lot of my classes … homework is due on the same day, so time management is a big one."

Mr. Washington described the MOCI as,

> it is a community of people who… felt like they were by themselves, and it is doing a lot of good for um people who felt alone and it's helping to stop statistics of um some people who drop out because Black men [have the]… the highest drop-out rate: so, it's helping to fix that.

Mr. Washington briefly talked about his experiences as a Black man on campus. As a Black man, he stated, "it doesn't feel like anything because like I look to my left and my right its other Black men you know this is a small community… so, I don't feel like singled out." During the interview, Mr. Washington described the MOCI leadership team as relatable. When asked to explain what he meant by relatable.

Mr. Washington said,

> they [the individuals who make up the leadership team] would …give you …lessons … or whatever the topic would be something that we all have struggled with before or are currently struggling with. So, every member [could] relate to it in some way and be able to pitch to how they dealt with the problem… to help [find] a solution.

The interview with Mr. Washington was conducted online. He was dressed in casual attire that included a coat. Visual observation determined that Mr. Washington appeared to be in a friendly mood. He was assertive and made good eye contact. A concluding thought stated by Mr. Washington was "I feel like if [there is] anything you can take from college is just seeing through the [MOCI] process and it is going to make college life a lot easier… cause the support is there."

Participant Two

Mr. Lincoln is a 24-year-old student who declared his major to be Associate in Science in Business Administration - Accounting. He comes from a single-parent household. Mr. Lincoln indicated that his first introduction to higher education began at a four-year institution. He said, "my family kind of pushed me towards [the university]." Mr. Lincoln stated,

> My first year of college I went to [the]… university, and uh after my first year I had trouble balancing work and school, and I also had to pay out of pocket. I later enrolled at [my local community college], it was more affordable on my end to attend and um, it's closer to home, and I did not have to stress too much about commuting.

When asked about his understanding of the MOCI, he said, "[the leadership team] … kind of set a standard for me where I want to be in my life." He continued by commenting on his environment. Mr. Lincoln explained,

> You know, when we come from the city, you know the odds are against us, whether you know we have a father in our life …, you know, a single parent household … a lot of these factors don't really benefit us.

Mr. Lincoln said it is difficult to be a Black man, explaining,

> It's definitely a challenge because, no matter where you're from as a Black man, a man of color you're already labeled and no matter what you do that label is going to stick with you for the rest of your life and the only time you have to kind of remove any negative label from yourself is to actually talk to people. You know … all these negative stigma [that] stick to Black men or men of color.

The interview with Mr. Lincoln was conducted online. The interview with Mr. Lincoln started a little late and took place during his lunch break. His background was blurred. He wore a blue shirt. He appeared to be in a good and friendly mood.

Participant Three

Mr. Chicago is a 23-year-old student. According to Mr. Chicago, he joined the college in 2018 and needs 30 credits to graduate. He declared his major of associate in arts degree in Liberal Arts. Mr. Chicago stated he was really excited about graduating from high school with a high GPA. Mr. Chicago went on to say he was excited to attend community college after graduating high school. The participant decided to attend college because his peers talked about furthering their education. He said, "like, honestly, when I graduated from high school, I thought that everything would be move everything will like

work out good but college [has] been rough. I felt alone." Mr. Chicago expounded on the thought saying,

> Friendship… is the one thing that I like, really stuck with me at high school. And like the fact that I saw some of my friends from high school [at the college] but we never had the same class or never been consistent with them, I felt, I felt like alone, because, like normally, at high school, all of us would have the same schedule.

Mr. Chicago comes from a single-parent household and is an only child, explaining,

> I am not whole today really. I never had a dad like a father in my life. Well, I had a father figure, but um never really, never really connected that much. I am the only man in the house.

The interview evolved to touch on his feelings of being a Black man at the community college. He said, "I honestly never sensed any racism towards me; however, if anything… it was more like I felt misunderstood." In the interview, Mr. Chicago said that in the MOCI he encountered,

> great people… like you learn something but from a different point of view, I mean different perspective. Like some of … [individuals] like humor, some of them are more serious than others, some of them are like down to Earth, and like all of them like together like brothers united, and… all of the comradery stuff.

Mr. Chicago expressed the MOCI is a good place for men, saying,

> I think the [MOCI] did well. Recently, yeah, they talked about topics that or not addressed enough to be honest like, emotional intelligence, it would have been nice to have basically like, more expanded upon that a little bit more.

Mr. Chicago talked about the value of conversations or sessions about feelings, stating,

> Conversation on how to deal with going through something so something that [is] hard, right, the loss of like an opportunity and at the same time like accepting the fact that it is okay to cry as a man, except the fact that it's a gradual growing process.

Also, Mr. Chicago explained, "the [MOCI] is ah it basically is [an] organization for man (sic) who are able to express themselves, and share what is on their minds, and like everything that's the, every emotion, that men feel like they can't express otherwise."

The interview with Mr. Chicago was conducted remotely. Only a headshot could be seen on the screen. The interview started a few minutes after the agreed-upon time. He wore glasses, a black hat, and a blue pullover sweater. He was in a good and positive mood at the start of the interview. Mr. Chicago participated in the interview from a classroom.

Participant Four

Mr. Waterloo is a 48-year-old student. He joined the college in 2022 and needs 60 credits to graduate. He is a single parent raising three young children. He declared his major to be an associate in science in Business Administration – Accounting. Mr. Waterloo said he attended the community college to get his life together. He talked about getting on the right path and being an example for his six-year-old son, saying,

> I had to get my life together. I've been out on the streets, ripping and running since I was 14. I'm 48 now. But at 45, I realized I had to get on the right path, I had a son, he's six years old and that was my purpose to start going to school, to better myself for me and my son.

Mr. Waterloo said he played a lot of games in his life, explaining,

> I played a lot of years a long, long time. But I'm glad that the universe kept me around, and me not being… deceased, like I could have been, it kept me around it is telling me that it had a purpose for me to be here. And now I see it because I love the school, I love everything about the school, everything.

Mr. Waterloo shared his fear about entering community college, having not had classroom instruction in an educational setting in over ten years, saying,

> One thing I don't like, when I got here, I haven't been to school since I was about 17 years old… where I had dropped out. When I got back here to start school all over again, they gave me a laptop. I'm like, whoa.

He went on to discuss his frustration about his lack of experience using technology, which is embedded in many aspects of his academic encounters, such as registration, financial aid, and the classroom content made available on the learning management system. Mr. Waterloo said,

> I thought I would be able to get a laptop class or something, but I never got one. I'm in the second semester and I don't have it all down packed yet. I think that I should have got some more help and I should have got a class or something because I haven't been to school in about 10 years.

About being a Black man on campus, Mr. Waterloo asserted,

> I see it's not a lot of us here. But all the Black men, we all speak to one another, it's not like you walk down the hallway, nobody's shooting rocks, like looking at each other all hard and stuff like that,… [we are not] on a corner, none of that street stuff in here. There's no ghetto stuff going on in this school.

Mr. Waterloo talked about his difficult home life. He said he spoke to two professors from the leadership team, and explained,

> I'm just speechless really how much they helped me. They helped me from day one. I talk to both about what's going on in my home and I tell them what's going on with my lady [my son's mother]. She's bipolar and it's really hard for me to stay … but I have a son that's six years old so I really can't go nowhere, … it's very hard, very, very hard.

The interview with Mr. Waterloo was conducted remotely. He participated in the interview from a college conference room. He used his college laptop to participate. The screen only captured a headshot with a blurred background. So, his apparel was not apparent. Mr. Waterloo appeared to be in a good mood at the start and conclusion of the interview.

Participant Five

Mr. Yonkers is a 20-year-old student. He declared the major of associate of science in Liberal Arts. He comes from a single-parent household. He joined the college in 2022 and needs 47 credits to graduate. Mr. Yonkers said attending college was a last-minute decision. He decided to attend college to play basketball, stating,

> I wanted to go to college, but I wasn't sure like what I wanted to pursue. I wanted to play basketball directly out of high school, [but]… it took me a year to figure that out. I ended up talking to the coaches and they seemed cool. So that's why, uh, I ended up attending.

Mr. Yonkers stated entering college, he thought,

> Let me just show up and see what this is. Um, honestly, I'm not sure what I expected like… I was consciously entering not confidently entering either, but… like I wasn't like nervous, like but…it was definitely a learning experience. [College] was kind of in a gray area, like, let me just show up and see what this is.

Mr. Yonkers talked about how the MOCI exposed him to things not on his radar. He said,

> The [MOCI] to me is just a program, that…provides like a safe haven…I wanna say, cause it provides a sense of comfortability, like, alright, it's people that look like you here trying to do the same thing as you that are coming from the same spot as you or not specifically, but maybe similar situations, but we've all experienced similar situations just being a person of color. So that helps a lot and we're building a connection.

Mr. Yonkers talked about being a Black man, sharing,

> Honestly, … I don't feel out a place, because, uh, I consider… people of color like with African descent, um. I consider them like my brothers and sisters as well, even though there's… kind of a majority of ah Brown and not necessarily Black people. It's pretty normal like any other school.

The interview with Mr. Yonkers was conducted in person. The interview started five minutes before the appointment. He wore a red shirt with blue pants, and he carried a book backpack. He was in a positive mood before and at the conclusion of the interview. He made very good eye contact and was engaged during the entire interview.

Participant Six

Mr. Jackson is a 30-year-old student. He joined the college in 2015 and is close to graduating. He did not declare a major. He is an independent student from a two-parent

household – mother and father. Mr. Jackson selected the community college to play basketball. His focus was not on education. He stated, "I didn't see it; it just didn't interest me." College did not interest him even though he knew education could open the door to opportunities. Mr. Jackson said, "it didn't like, I don't know, it just didn't catch my attention." Mr. Jackson felt the MOCI could help him with self-exploration, He said,

> I felt and thought that [the MOCI] would help me to be a better man. I also felt and thought that I could contribute to the cause and the initiative. I felt like it was a good relationship where I could benefit and also put back into an organization.

He said his family and MOCI were a huge resource for him, telling me,

> My number one resource would be God and I would say my family, my mother and my father mainly. They've been my number one resource. I'm blessed to have both my parents. You see what I'm saying? And in my life, I would say the leadership team here, my coach, the coaching staff here at… [the college], … have been a huge resource for me.

Mr. Jackson briefly talked about being a Black man, explaining,

> I would say… hopeful. Hopeful, I don't want to talk too negative on being who I am because I know that we're progressing little by little. I don't want to talk about it, it is a challenge. Being who we are is very much a challenge. Day to day and second by second, it's a huge challenge. I'm grateful to be a Black man. I'm hopeful, … it's a challenge being a Black man. So, each day I just strive for the best. There are obstacles that we go through, but I know that moving forward as a people, as a community, so I don't really want to talk too much about the negative. So that's all I can say."

Mr. Jackson talked about not having the maturity to understand the value of a college degree. He said, “I kind of knew the importance of it within myself, but at the state I was, in the maturity level and stuff like that. I just didn't really… [wasn’t] interested in it.”

The interview with Mr. Jackson was conducted remotely. He used his cell phone as the platform for the virtual session. He wore a Black T-shirt. He participated from an empty classroom on campus; he walked during the interview. At the start of the interview, he was in a good mood.

Participant Seven

Mr. Paris is a 31-year-old student. He joined the college in 2010 and needs 18 credits to graduate. He is an independent student; no family information was provided. He declared the major of associate in science in Criminal Justice. Mr. Paris indicated that his choice was to attend a four-year school and stated that he did not want to attend a community college, but realized he was not college-ready and was hopeful about the community college. He said, "the community college gives you an opportunity to kind of catch up to what's going on academically." Mr. Paris also said,

> Well, my choice was to go to a four-year school. I didn't really want to come to a community college because everybody that comes to … when you're young, when you're eight, 17, 18, 19, you know, you really want to go to those four-year schools. But we are uneducated on what are the risks, and what is asked of you when you go to a four-year school. I feel that a four-year school is for college students [who are] academically in shape, academically ready. Community colleges give you an opportunity to kind of catch up to what's going on academically. But there's a lot of perks, coming to a community college.

When I asked Mr. Paris to explain what he meant by perks he said, “the cost is cheaper for the credits, compared to when you go to a four-year school, you may spend maybe $700 or $800, $900 per credit, and you come to a community college, you may spend $300 or $400.” Additionally, Mr. Paris went on to explain,

> When it comes to the help you get on campus academically, they know you a little bit more, it's more personal at a community college. You know, you go to a four-year school, they just know you by as a number. When you leave out that classroom, they may not know who you are. We have more of a community vibe when you come to a community college. They know you by name: they know who you are.

On the topic of being a Black man on campus and his interaction with faculty and staff members, Mr. Paris stated,

> It's like I have to prove a little bit more because when you come to community college, especially urban community colleges [we Black men are] academically behind…they're [Black men] in these remedial courses for a year or two, and they lose attention, and they never come back. I can basically say it's 50/50. It's 50/50 because they actually really don't know who I really am, and what my qualifications are.

The interview with Mr. Paris was conducted remotely. He used his cell phone to participate. He was dressed in business attire. Mr. Paris wore a Black sweater with a white pattern. He was situated in an empty classroom on campus, where he walked during the interview.

Themes

After completing the interviews with the participants of the study, analyzing the data led to the development of three phenomenological themes, which are brotherhood, the value of activities and networking, and support and caring. Phenomenological themes and essential patterns that emerged from the analysis interpreting the lived experiences of individuals led to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by exploring the richness and complexity of human experiences. The data analysis resulted in the first theme of MOCI as a brotherhood. Brotherhood in this study means the close and supportive relationship between people, often characterized as a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. The concept was used in the context where individuals share common goals, values, or experiences. The second theme was the value of activities and networking. The value of activities and networking in this study is about enhanced engagement using activities to create personal growth opportunities and venues for networking. The third theme constructed from the study participants' data was support and caring. Support and caring in this study relate to intentional acts that resulted in a sense of feeling emotion and academic support, being heard without judgement, and feeling of being accepted without judgement.

Brotherhood

The first theme, brotherhood, described the connections participants experienced in the MOCI. These young men explained how they actively engaged in the MOCI programming and formed strong relationships. The relationships described by the participants of this study were meaningful and robust. The participants explained these relationships as their own community – a brotherhood. Mr. Washington explained, "I

would say uh, it is a community of people… who felt like they were by themselves, and it is doing a lot of good, for, um, people who felt alone." Mr. Lincoln said, "for me, the way I see [MOCI] is it's a brotherhood and I mean… everybody has each other's back if you need help." Mr. Chicago explained, "well, then I guess, like they are great people… like together like brothers united. And all that all that comradery stuff." Mr. Waterloo shared, "[MOCI] is togetherness of brotherhood to me. That's what I look at it as. I look at everybody in [MOCI] as my brother and they look at me as the same. We're not strangers to one another." Mr. Yonkers explained, "alright, um, in the [MOCI] meetings…there is just a sense of, uh, like brotherhood… everybody [is] there, every everybody is like engaged. This meeting with the brothers, it helps me express myself."

The experiences described by these Black men suggest that targeted programming designed to create a support system can positively impact integrating them into the college community by building a community within a community – a brotherhood (Harper & Harris, 2012). The participants of this study described finding a sense of community. The participants spoke about how they learned to belong by developing relationships and connecting to other men within the MOCI, essential in building connections to the larger college community. Because of the challenges facing Black men in higher education, efforts to cultivate collaboration and caring created an environment where these men perceived they were welcomed, thus, creating a foundation for learning (Harper & Harris, 2012).

The Value of Activities and Networking

The MOCI provided the participants with experiences that increased their personal growth. The participants of this study discussed that they grew up in urban

areas. They briefly shared information about the workshops as vital social gatherings for receiving new information, for activities, and for networking. The workshops were designed to help the participants adjust to college life through structured programming. However, some of the sessions were less structured and more free flowing, designed to enhance the sharing of knowledge. These sessions provided a mechanism for sharing information from leadership to member and member to member. The participants described the importance of gathering with each other and external presenters, which is a form of networking. The workshops also introduced programs and events these participants otherwise would not have pursued if not for the MOCI. Mr. Lincoln told me, "You know we learned about… financial literacy… networking with [external] individuals and [entities] is a big thing, you know we made connections with [the] Bank". Mr. Washington shared:

> The SEU [Special Engagement Unit, that is part of MOCI] project that I am a part of right now … involves computer science…. The project we're working on is a virtual mentoring space and that's a little experience that [MOCI] is doing on the side for me, myself, and a few other [MOCI] members. Probably the biggest tool is networking with people around me. I would say that's one of the biggest tools I can take.

Mr. Jackson explained,

> Actually, [the MOCI] took me… to my first hockey game. And it was amazing. It was a great experience. I... probably to be honest, I probably would've never went to a hockey game in my entire life, to be honest. And [MOCI], they brought me into that environment and that actually opened my eyes up to other things. It made

me think like, “hey, if I wasn't going to do this, what else wasn't I ever going to do?” You know what I mean? And maybe let me try that, also. So, it is just an overall dope experience.

The participants of this study described personal exploration and development. The study participants shared examples of networking activities that led to increased awareness. Some of the participants discussed the workshops and men’s night events as a safe space and time in which they learned more about themselves and strengthened connections with their peers and the leadership team.

The data described new and varied experiences through the participants involvement in the MOCI. Mr. Washington and Mr. Jackson explained their learning in terms of exposure to events not previously considered and meeting people not normally exposed to via networking. The program put participants in situations to have encountered new and diverse experiences by being exposed to events that were not previously within their consideration. These encounters led to positive and enriching happenings that brought about personal growth, expanded perspectives, and increased the opportunity to learn and adapt. The workshops and outings provided valuable engagements in activities and programs at the college.

Support and Caring

The participants described their experiences in the workshops as supportive and caring. The workshops are topic-driven and designed around specific programming to help the participants adapt to college life and explore available resources. The participants described their perceived sense of being cared for and welcomed and attributed these to the MOCI. The men of this study described their involvement in

activities where they felt support that aided their educational journey. The participants conveyed thoughts of the workshops being a positive atmosphere that felt welcoming and friendly. Mr. Washington said,

> Before I came here, there was a lot of talk about it being the thirteenth grade [a lot of hand holding]. In a way, it is like, that and in a lot of ways, it is definitely something … more … and the support is great.

Mr. Lincoln said,

> [The leadership team] … laid out the platform for us in order for us to make our own decisions. And you, you know with our own insight make these informed decisions. [The leadership team] … [was] standing there watching us, if we were to make a mistake [they] … jumped in helped us kind of assess the situation.

Mr. Yonkers explained,

> I feel like [a member of the MOCI leadership] did do a good job of reaching out…like this guy is literally going out of his way to make sure you are okay... because he cares like it's a real genuine feeling in there; so that's cool.

Mr. Jackson told me,

> the… [people in the MOCI] have been a huge resource for me. I'm really just grateful for them… I feel like I can open up to them and talk about what it is that has been going on with me that's good and bad. So, I feel like vulnerable. I feel like I trust them. I feel like I got faith in them.

Mr. Lincoln said,

> When I went to school, … I didn't feel right. I was never happy. I wasn't satisfied with what I was doing. And again, if it wasn't for [the MOCI] and the people I met from [MOCI] … [it] is what keeps me going.

The MOCI program seemed to enhance the collegiate experiences of Black men through a student-centered program that nurtured a sense of caring. The enriched college experience created a bond and close relationships with peers and the MOCI leadership team. Based on the perceptions described by the participants, the unwavering support they received influenced their level of participation in the MOCI programs and engagement in the college community.

Mr. Yonkers, Mr. Lincoln, and Mr. Waterloo described their recognition of a professor or program leader actively working to keep them encouraged or provided unique support. The participants heard and shared stories. Stories form relatable happenings, describing the struggles and paths to success according to the participants' words (Koch et al., 2019). Stories are highly effective and relevant to connect to the human experience and sense of caring (Davis, 2015; Koch et al., 2019; Roscoe, 2015). The experiences shared by the participants provided examples of coaching, sharing, and caring. The theme of support and caring recognized the importance of such interactions, which could increase student engagement and translate to a positive effect on college persistence.

Essence

My analysis identified the unique perceptions and experiences of the study participants as they lived them (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental Phenomenology research allowed me to review the data to obtain the pattern of meaning (Moustakas,

1994; Parks, 2021). Transcendental Phenomenology research anticipates and provides a way to account for the researcher's objectivity to obtain an unbiased description of the raw data by incorporating bracketing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Young et al., 2009). Bracketing in my phenomenological study allowed me to analyze the raw data captured through interviews to identify the essence of the phenomenon. The study captured the essence of the happening shared by the Black men who participated in the MOCI program. The experiences described are authentic because the phenomenon happened to the students of the MOCI in a shared space where they lived and learned (Moustakas, 1994). The study of this group of individuals led to the discovery of the set of properties or attributes which, by necessity, established a shared identity. The study shows the unique essence is that while the students came from slightly different backgrounds, they became emotionally invested in each other's success to form a community with shared values. The study revealed that the participants experienced the value of activities and networking and felt supported and cared for.

Summary

The chapter explained the experiences of the study participants, Black men who participated in the college MOCI program. The participants' stories provided their experiences, through which I became more knowledgeable about the phenomenon. The personal accounts described a sense of brotherhood with the other participants and leadership of the program. Their perceptions conveyed the importance of participating in activities and the value generated through these encounters. Additionally, the participants expressed their excitement about networking and how feeling cared about motivated them to persist in the program. The program is embedded with various student

touchpoints and deliberate efforts to cultivate collaboration and caring. The analysis of the shared accounts described by the male participants showed that encounters and experiences facilitated through the MOCI program were meaningful and robust. The program's construction and utilization of workshops and men's night worked to facilitate the shared experiences. I understood the phenomenon at a deeper level through the interactive analysis and interpretation of the data collected and bracketing (epoché) and unbracketing, which led to the explanation of the phenomenon observed. This chapter provides the rationale for the design, setting, selection of participants, procedures, data collection, and methods of establishing validity and trustworthiness. In Chapter V, the last chapter, I provide an overview of the study, a discussion of the findings, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

Chapter V

Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Chapter V offers a holistic view of this research project; it is organized into nine sections, which are as follows: 1) overview of the study; 2) discussion of the findings; 3) answers to the research questions; 4) discussion of research questions 5) conceptual framework 6) implications for practice; 7) implications for future research; 8) implications for institutional leadership; and 9) conclusion. This chapter explains the work conducted to explore Black men's perceptions and experiences about participation in the MOCI. This qualitative phenomenological work resulted in findings that answered the research questions about Black men participating in the MOCI who sought education as the pathway to prosperity (Thomas & Reed, 2007). The following section of this chapter provides an overview of the work.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the perceptions and experiences of the Black men who participated in the MOCI at a community college. The work was conducted using transcendental phenomenological research. This design used qualitative interview data to understand the phenomenon through the individual's lived experience to obtain a holistic view of the essence of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative method is the appropriate structure for this work to understand the phenomena studied (Baber et al., 2016; CCSSE, 2014; Smith & Harper, 2015).

Community colleges were initially established to prepare high school graduates for the first two years of college education to earn a certificate, an associate degree, or transfer to a four-year institution (Beach, 2011). These institutions provided open access

to education for rural communities, where distance created a barrier, and for disenfranchised communities to address racial integration by integrating students across ethnic and racial lines (Glenn, 2003). However, today, community colleges attract students beyond the original mandate. Many students who attend these institutions are not traditional college students. Some students who attend community colleges are beyond the age of twenty-four, employed at least part-time, and are supporting a family (Espinosa et al., 2019). Another additional complicated component to the challenging academic journey of these students is that some are the first in their families to attend college. Finally, roughly half of community college students are low-income, without financial support from their parents, and a third are students of color (Espinosa et al., 2019).

Many Black men have enrolled at their local community college as the path to their potential (Bush & Bush, 2010). These men enroll with the hope of finding a pathway that leads to earning a degree or certificate to earn a higher living wage. Sadly, according to scholarship, these men are less likely to graduate with an associate degree or to transfer to a four-year institution or another community college (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; NCES, 2019). Black men enroll at community colleges due to the convenient locations, open admissions policies, and low cost (Bush & Bush, 2010; Espinosa et al., 2019; Glenn, 2003). Unfortunately, the educational system has marginalized a disproportionately high number of Black men (Attewell et al., 2006; Bush & Bush, 2010; Espinosa et al., 2019). To compound this issue, many Black men who enter the community college system become ensnared in remedial classes and ultimately drop out without transferring or completing any degree or certificate program (Attewell et

al., 2006). National leaders in the community college sector have recognized these issues and increased their focus on enhancing Black men's academic performance and educational experiences (Brooms, 2018; Glenn, 2003). The issue is that much of the literature is based on a deficit-informed orientation as a foundation for developing a theory to improve outcomes for Black men who attend community colleges (CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012; Urias et al., 2016). Therefore, a more optimistic approach is targeted programming focused on positive orientation for men who have been underserved, such as structured, social cohesion programs focused on success purposed to increase student retention and graduation rates (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Hanover Research, 2014; Tinto, 2017). Programming can help students make friends and learn about the college experience, leading to better decision-making and improved experiences (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). Programs of this composition can lead to increased participation, improved time management skills, and better study skills that help acclimate students to institutional policies and procedures, all with the purpose of completion (Hanover Research, 2014). Student programs geared toward Black men may increase outcomes because they are supported by an environment designed to create and cultivate success for them. These programs should make the students who participate feel a sense of belonging and worth within the college environment (Booker, 2007; Brooms, 2018; Harris & Wood, 2013).

The framework of this study was fashioned to understand better the meaning of the shared lived experiences of Black men who participated in the MOCI. Access and support to students who attend a community college in an urban setting is vital for student academic success and retention. Programs designed with student services and

faculty engagement can serve to improve learning, fill in the gap for missing knowledge, and improve the educational experiences for Black men (Harris III et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006; Wesley & Ellis, 2017).

I used transcendental phenomenology to discover the essence of participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The transcendental phenomenology method I deployed incorporated bracketing to aid with inquiry (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). The design helped me obtain an unbiased description of the raw data. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Young et al., 2009). This phenomenological study focused on what the participants of the study had in common to construct the meaning of the event studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Parks, 2021; Peoples, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Young et al., 2009).

The study was guided by the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM), which captured the experiences and perceptions of Black men who participated in the MOCI (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts necessary to design, understand, and analyze ways to investigate and support the research (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The SEM is a theory-based underpinning used to understand human development introduced by Bronfenbrenner (1981). In-depth knowledge was accumulated regarding the perceptions of Black men who participated in the enhanced program to answer the research questions.

The perceptions and experiences of the Black men who participated in the MOCI were collected through personal interviews to explore these men's perceptions and experiences about the influence of MOCI on their academic journey. The research

questions used in this qualitative study to conduct this work through the SEM lens is as follows:

1. How do Black men describe their experiences in the MOCI program?
2. Why do Black men participate in the MOCI?
3. In what ways can the MOCI be helpful or improved?

The study had seven participants, who all met the inclusion criteria that they were Black men who attended the institution and participated in the MOCI. The next section of this work provides a discussion of the findings about the participants of this study.

Discussion of the Findings

This section provides a discussion of the findings of this study and then answers the research questions. In order to develop conclusions and recommendations from the written anecdotes and the themes, the data analysis involved three vital steps. The data analysis resulted in the findings, which were compared to the literature review to see if the global themes accurately reflected the participants' essence (Hannon et al., 2016, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016).

Brotherhood

The data analysis revealed the sense of brotherhood participants felt when describing their experiences with MOCI. The results suggested that the Black men who participated in the MOCI program experienced positive feelings of a community within a community. The participants attributed their shared sense of belonging to similar experiences and situations unique to Black men who grew up in an urban environment. The college experience extends far beyond the classrooms, and the data highlight the importance of extracurricular activities and peer interactions outside formal academic

settings to influence students' experiences (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Glenn, 2003; Harper, 2012; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006). The sense of shared challenges encountered pursuing higher education functioned as commonalities to the Black men of this study that functioned to create a strong connection. Harris and Wood (2013) contend that an intense sense of belonging is a foundation of student success. The connection created by the MOCI cultivated meaningful relationships among the peers, which motivated them and stimulated a desire to continue their educational goals (Booker, 2007; Brooms, 2018; Harris & Wood, 2013). The MOCI program worked to facilitate the students' interactions with one another. Successful programs promote an anti-deficit achievement or positive orientation, which is rooted in elevated levels of academic preparation, support, and extracurricular activity to generate comradery and commitment, which I termed the royal jelly (Brooms et al., 2018; Glenn, 2003; Harper, 2012). Black men who participated in the MOCI and other programs tailored to support Black men show that the participants discovered their identities through shared learning, developed confidence, and learned to set academic goals (Brooms et al., 2018). Participants expressed feelings about how they acquired knowledge through the MOCI that helped them integrate into the college community. These skills were used to develop relationships and connect to other men within the MOCI. Baber et al. (2016) suggests that helping students access the knowledge they value can lead to increased academic motivation and enrich peer bonding. The brotherhood formed within the community established by programs like the MOCI provides students with resources and information to bolster their confidence and help them successfully navigate issues on and off campus that challenge their persistence (Brooms, 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Smith-McLallen et al.,

2006). Programming like the MOCI is purposed to promote a brotherhood with the expressed goal to encourage engagement and support inclusion (Smith-McLallen et al., 2006). The multifaceted interaction created and cultivated by the MOCI program observed in this study illustrates how the system influenced its members.

BMI and MOCI programs are resources that help Black men establish and strengthen their sense of purpose (Baber et al., 2016; Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Harris & Wood, 2013; Palmer et al., 2010; Wood & Palmer, 2012). Programs like the MOCI aid students by creating smaller micro-communities, as seen in the data, to reduce the complexity of the campus experience to a more manageable size to make navigation easier (Palmer et al., 2010). Additionally, the theme-based program establishes a buttress to address challenges unique to Black men; one such issue could be racial battle fatigue. Providing a safe space for Black men to freely discuss their problems, anxiety, and issues without fear of judgment works to combat battle fatigue and other issues unique to Black men (Smith-McLallen et al., 2006).

The Value of Activities and Networking

The finding uncovered the vital theme of the value of activities and networking. The study uncovered the personal exploration perceived by the participants through activities that led to increased awareness. The data showed that the workshops and men's night events functioned as an opportunity in which the participants learned more about themselves and other members of the MOCI. Study participants explained their learning in terms of exposure to events and circumstances not previously considered, and because the participants had a positive experience, they became more willing to try and explore something new. The workshops and outings were eye-opening encounters that provided

valuable engagements through programming offered at the college through the MOCI program.

Learning opportunities and stimulating activities create an environment for students to explore scholastic and personal development (CCCSE, 2014; Harper & Harris, 2012; Sledge, 2016; Torrens et al., 2017). Elevated expectations are essential for students to experience success in and out of the classroom. When students feel the pressure of being pushed, their internal desire powers them to recognize the challenge and work harder (CCCSE, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016). The findings of this study show that the participants were pushed to try new things. The MOCI served as a promoter to build new experiences and successes. Brooms (2018) identified how participants discussed their BMI experiences; it revealed the development of the student's sociocultural capital for expressive and instrumental purposes. The BMI in that study and the MOCI in this study-built community through cohesive bonds developed through structured programming and activities (Baber et al., 2016; Brooms, 2018).

During the study, participants discussed the value of some of the networking activities. Mr. Lincoln shared his experience about attending a session on financial literacy and expressed his excitement about networking with individuals from a financial institution. The study showed how participants perceived personal exploration and development. Active involvement through student-centered programming helped the participants expand their networks on campus, which helped them expand their confidence and capacity (Baber et al., 2016).

The MOCI created an environment to increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of Black men (Brooms, 2018; Broom et al., 2018). An

emphasis of the MOCI is to develop the meaning of the experiences of Black men and provide critical insights into ways to support and enhance a sense of self (Brooms, 2018). Black men excel in college when the environment supports their narrative of success as it relates to their families and communities (Brooms, 2018; Broom et al., 2018). Opportunities for these men to engage with others with shared values and a community within a community are stimulating and empowering (Brooms et al., 2018). The artificially created environment filled with activities and social events helps students to feel comfortable and is conducive for making friends and networking (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004). When students are in a setting surrounded by other students who have like educational ambitions and goals, they are empowered to grow, which enhances the educational experience (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Patton et al., 2016).

Support and Caring

The findings showed that the participants perceived workshops as supportive and caring. Some workshops were designed to help Black men adapt to college life and explore available resources as they promote an environment for engagement (Brooms et al., 2018). The MOCI program enriched the experiences of Black men through a student-centered program designed to foster a sense of caring (Davis, 2015; Koch et al., 2019; Roscoe, 2015). Engaging and motivating students to seek help when needed shows support and caring and is an element of proactive advising (CCCSE, 2014; Davis, 2015; Finnie, 2017; Koch et al., 2019). The study identified that the participants established bonds with peers and the MOCI leadership team. The findings suggest that the participants' perceptions of the MOCI increased awareness of support services available

to them. The findings illustrated how the participants described their recognition of a professor or program leader actively working to encourage the program participants in their time of personal or academic need. The participants identified examples of sharing and caring, such as when Mr. Yonkers said he appreciated the faculty member going out of his way to check in with him. Mr. Lincoln also shared, "the people I met from MOCI … is what keeps me going." The study showed how the infusion of support and caring translated to positive experiences and engagement. Additionally, the encounters functioned as the sharing of information through workshops and stories; stories are highly effective and relevant to connect to the human experience (Koch et al., 2019).

Programs that include intentional contact with students with the purpose of developing a caring and beneficial relationship lead to increased academic motivation and persistence (Davis, 2015; Roscoe, 2015). The MOCI program provided elements of proactive advising because it is an action-oriented program purposed at engaging and motivating students to seek help when needed (Finnie, 2017; Harris et al., 2017). Programs like the MOCI are designed to cultivate collaborative and caring environments where Black men perceive they have access to the resources necessary to help them achieve their academic objectives (Harper & Harris, 2012). Programs infused with opportunities to increase touch points with the students help faculty and practitioners connect with the students to aid them in making the decision to remain enrolled and achieve academic success (Roscoe, 2015).

The MOCI helped establish an inclusive environment where Black men felt accepted and valued. The study unveiled elements of caring in the form of relationships with trusted individuals of the leadership team, a form of mentorship experienced by the

men who participated in the program. Mentoring can increase engagement and connection; such a connection can foster confidence and increase engagement with faculty and other college personnel (CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Woods, 2013). Mentoring fosters a relationship with the student to demystify policies and procedures that impact students and provide critical thinking skills and strategies to enhance academic success (Eby et al., 2015). Black men can achieve success in college when the proper support systems are in place; programs like the MOCI embrace the individual and provide a path to success (CCCSE, 2014; Eby et al., 2015).

Structured programs that provide activities and mentoring are best practices that can aid in student success (CCCSE, 2014; Torrens et al., 2017). The participants of this study, through participation in the MOCI, experienced meaningful opportunities of engagement that enabled them to critically reflect and make sense of their educational journey at the institution (Urias et al., 2016). This approach to advising focused on bringing campus services to the student in a one-stop shop model rather than waiting for the student to identify their own need then initiate contact (Davis, 2015; Finnie, 2017; Schwebel, 2012). The MOCI provided proactive advising to reach the students through emails, standing meetings, and conversations with faculty (Davis, 2015; Harris & Wood, 2013). MOCI and other programs that use these types of practices aided in building relationships with the program participants to be perceived as accessible and supportive (Davis, 2015). Proactive advising models lead to better retention and student success in college; thus, the MOCI program, which contains some of these elements, may work to improve student retention (CCCSE, 2014; Davis, 2015; Harris et al., 2017).

Campus engagement with Black men in and out of the classroom includes different opportunities to promote relationships with faculty, deans, and administrators (Baber et al., 2016; Harper, 2005; Huerta et al., 2018; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Schwebel, 2012). The highest connection with students takes place in the classroom, tying them to the institution (Jones & Hansen, 2014). The MOCI included engagement with individuals from the faculty as a component of the program. The intentional approach holistically engaged students through personal relationships within the MOCI helped to build a connection with faculty members (CCCSE, 2014; Jones & Hansen, 2014). Like faculty connections, students believed instructor engagement demonstrated that they cared (CCCSE, 2014). The participants talked about the care, support, and mentorship experienced in MOCI. Mr. Waterloo explained, “I'm just speechless really how much they helped me.” Mr. Chicago stated, “conversation on how to deal with … like accepting the fact that it is okay to cry as a man, except the fact that it's a gradual growing process.” Proactive advising enhances the students' responsibilities for their educational plans and allows for early interventions (Finnie, 2017; Jones & Hansen, 2014). Thus, the role of faculty members served as a critical component of service to the students (Davis, 2015; Jones & Hansen, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

Answers to the Research Questions

The essence in this study revealed that Black men who participated in the MOCI perceived they experienced a sense of brotherhood. The findings also discovered that men who participated in the MOCI perceived the value of activities and networking. The study findings further indicated that participants in the MOCI program experienced

support and caring. The SEM underpinning was critical for understanding the phenomenon's essence and human experiences.

Research Question One

Research question one sought to understand how the participants described their experiences in the MOCI program. The focus of this question was to capture the subtle and complex aspects that Black men shared regarding their involvement in the program. As I delved into the analysis, a compelling revelation was contextualized – the emergence of a brotherhood experienced among the Black men of the MOCI who participated in this study. This finding not only shed light on the transformative power of the MOCI program but also unveiled the significance of fostering a sense of community within the larger college setting (Brooms et al., 2018).

The data revealed that the Black men who participated in the MOCI program described experiencing a brotherhood. The finding showed that the MOCI served as a safe space for the men to create a community within the college community. The MOCI program functioned as a catalyst for this brotherhood, a haven where the Black men came together, forged connections, and established a community of their own. This discovery underscores the pivotal role of supportive environments in facilitating positive experiences for marginalized groups within educational institutions. Harris and Wood (2013) discussed how programs like the MOCI foster success for men of color who traditionally are marginalized by creating a community tailored to address their unique needs. When the participants encountered each other outside the MOCI workshops, they communicated when passing in the hallways and enjoyed each other’s company at men’s

night out events. They also described the value of the workshops and men's night out events. Finally, they described the support and caring they felt within the MOCI.

The participants' perceived involvement with individuals from similar backgrounds who looked like them at the institution was a factor that kept them engaged during the semester. The answer to this question illuminated the positive impact of the MOCI program on participants' engagement during the semester. The participants' perceived involvement with individuals from similar backgrounds created a shared identity that was a motivational force, helping participants stay focused and committed. Thus, when asked how the Black men described their experiences in the program, the answer is as a brotherhood.

Research Question Two

Research question two sought to understand why Black men participated in the MOCI. The men participated in the MOCI because they felt a sense of community. The community provided them with the support and encouragement they needed. The brotherhood experienced by these young men through the program allowed them to experience the value of activities. Making connections and feeling more comfortable in the smaller system can help the participants to branch off and make connections across the college at large.

A pivotal inquiry into the motivations driving Black men's active participation in the MOCI focused on analyzing the participants' words to unravel the answer. The data analysis underscored the value of diverse activities and networking opportunities offered. The data revealed a compelling narrative of missing opportunities. The data suggests that the financial constraints, unremarkable K-12 experience, and limited social capital is part

of the explanation for missing knowledge and opportunities. This revelation agrees with the preponderance of studies that discuss the need for programs designed to fill in the gap for missing knowledge to improve the educational experiences for Black men (Harris III et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006; Wesley & Ellis, 2017). Thus, incorporating strategies to create a holistic and nurturing learning environment that supports students' social, emotional, and personal development based on a positive orientation can give them some of what they lacked – the royal jelly (CCCSE, 2014; Harper & Harris, 2012; Tautz, 2008; Torrens et al., 2017).

The participation of Black men in the MOCI was the profound sense of community it fostered. The participants found a supportive environment where they could share experiences, challenges, and successes with others who understood and empathized with their unique journey. This sense of camaraderie was a powerful force, providing a space where Black men felt understood, valued, and respected (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Tinto, 2017). The data suggests the MOCI offered more than just companionship; it provided tangible support, encouragement, and helped individuals navigate the environment. The participants' reflections painted a vivid picture of their challenges. The data shows how the study participants perceived new and positive experiences that might otherwise remain unattainable. Programs like the MOCI do work to bridge the experiential gaps that Black men encounter in their academic journey (Baber et al., 2015; CCCSE, 2014; Harper, 2012). Participation in initiatives plays a crucial role in reshaping and promoting positive experiences and opening doors to new opportunities, consistent with literature that suggests targeted programming focused on positive orientation for men who have been underserved can increase student retention

and graduation rates (Brooms, 2018; Brooms et al., 2018; Tinto, 2017). Thus, when asked why Black men participated in the initiative, the response is they appreciated the intrinsic value of activities and networking.

Research Question Three

The final research question sought how the MOCI could be helpful or improved. What emerged to answer this question was that the participants experienced a community of students like themselves, as well as support and care while participating in the MOCI. The data suggests the community created by the MOCI was helpful; it incorporated relevant content and support services to create a more inclusive learning environment that resonates with the lived realities of Black men. The workshops and men's night-out events provided new connections and increased their confidence. Exploration of the participants' experiences was crucial to understanding the various interventions in the program. The MOCI program intentionally integrated interactive and supportive elements. The participants experienced the availability of mentors in the form of the leadership team, who played a pivotal role in creating an environment conducive to sharing and growth. The MOCI created a safe and comfortable setting for the men to engage meaningfully with each other and the program facilitators (Brooms, 2018; Harris et al., 2017; Smith-McLallen et al., 2006). The MOCI curriculum was structured to foster mindfulness practices, structured meditations, and reflective exercises to address the holistic well-being of men who participated in the MOCI. The study participants highlighted the personalized feedback and encouragement they received from the leadership team. Also, this study suggests that programs geared toward increasing faculty and student contact outside of the classroom can improve retention and engagement.

CCCE (2014) indicates students are motivated to work when an instructor demonstrates care and empathy. Studies purport that student engagement and support are vital factors influencing students' persistence and overall satisfaction with their academic experience (Huerta et al., 2018; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Schwebel, 2012; Tinto, 1997). Increasing faculty and student contact outside of the classroom can positively impact retention and engagement levels (Huerta et al., 2018; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Schwebel, 2012). The results of this study show how the leadership team's engagement with the participants was positively received. As mentioned earlier in this study, the leadership team comprises a dean who teaches courses at the college, a program manager who teaches as a part-time adjunct, the program director, and a member of the administration. Engaging with teaching professionals created a more profound connection that resulted in learning environments extending beyond classroom boundaries. Interaction with faculty in the MOCI program was a critical element.

A recommendation emerged from the study suggesting the creation of a Women of Color Initiative (WOCI) specifically tailored for the advancement of Black women. One of the participants felt that regularly scheduled workshops focused on topics of value to both groups could enhance the college experience for both the MOCI and WOCI program participants. Collaboration and engagements of these types of programs could offer an opportunity to view topics from a unique perspective and enhance the opportunity to meet new people. Thus, when asked in what ways can the program be helpful or improved, the answer is increased support and care and the advent of a WOCI.

Discussion of Research Questions

This study identified that Black men's success in higher education hinges not only on academic support but also on the cultivation of a nurturing environment that values their experiences, fosters a sense of belonging, and provides avenues for meaningful engagement. The outreach experienced in the MOCI stands as evidence of the transformative power of such environments, as it creates a space that supports Black men academically and nurtures their sense of self and community (Brooms, 2018).

The MOCI operates on the positive orientation that Black men excel when their educational environments resonate with their communal narratives of success (Brooms et al., 2018). By embracing and validating their narrative, the MOCI created an atmosphere where students felt empowered to thrive. According to the participants' experiences, the program offered activities and social events tailored to the needs and interests of Black men. These opportunities fostered a sense of belonging and served as catalysts for networking and forging meaningful connections with peers who shared similar aspirations (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004).

The significance of networking and community support within the MOCI extended beyond social interactions to encompass meaningful engagement with faculty, administrators, and mentors. This research underscores the pivotal role of faculty engagement in fostering a sense of belonging and connection to the institution (Jones & Hansen, 2014). The intentional efforts of the MOCI to facilitate personal relationships between students and faculty members enhanced a profound sense of care and support (CCCSE, 2014).

The MOCI program appeared to have successfully created a sense of brotherhood among its participants through networking, support, and caring. Thus, the sense of brotherhood was manifested through activities, networking, support, and caring. By providing a nurturing environment, fostering meaningful engagement, and facilitating personal relationships, the program has established a strong sense of community.

Conceptual Framework

The SEM underpinning used for this study was essential for drawing connections between the MOCI and the participants' life experiences. This comprehensive multi-layered social system helped me learn about the individual interactions within the system and the effects of the system on the individuals where the phenomenon occurred (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The SEM adopted for this research involved five systems. The student is the core system, surrounded by the other tiers; this level is about the individual – about their ability (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The remaining four systems are the microsystem, the next circle to the individual, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1981).

Applying the SEM as a practical strategy in framing the phenomena was necessary to explain how the systems influenced the behavior and attitudes of individuals who participated in this study (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The SEM informed the design and analysis used to complete this study. The theoretical underpinning guided the methodology from selecting participants to the strategy used to generate the study conclusion (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner's (1981) scholarship on the SEM shows how interactions at the closest system have the most significant potential to influence change. I used the SEM underpinning to understand the impact of human development. Human development is multifaceted and interactive (Ahern, 1999; Allen et al., 2016; Trach et al., 2018). The SEM underpinning helped identify how multiple systems, as they related to the MOCI, influenced the attitudes of the participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The critical systems identified in this study are the student, the individual is the core system, and the second system, the microsystem (the closest system surrounding the individual), which has the strongest influences on the interactions and relationships of the immediate surroundings (Ahern, 1999; Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Trach et al., 2018). Programming deployed by the MOCI in the microsystem created a brotherhood that had a significant ability to influence the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). The theoretical underpinning helped me recognize the importance of the participants' shared struggles, goals, and community. The data illustrates how the participants' perceived involvement with individuals from similar backgrounds had a shared identity that was a motivational force, helping participants stay focused and committed. The SEM observed in action as the participant, the individual in the center of the five-system model, brought their knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and values influenced by the microsystem or interpersonal system where the MOCI resides. The direct and multiple touchpoints created using the workshops and extracurricular events with the participants illustrated the catalyst to cultivate change. The connectedness of the two systems demonstrated the interactions that occurred because of the MOCI. The theoretical underpinning was vital as the SEM facilitated the interactive investigation of

the individuals and the phenomenon (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner's SEM underpinning theorizes that an individual's development is influenced by a set of interconnected systems, including the immediate environment and broader societal influences. The direct contact of the MOCI with the individuals using workshops and men's night-out events prompted immediate alterations to the environments where the men engaged in daily activities. The microsystem in which the MOCI operated was crucial for shaping an individual's beliefs, behaviors, and overall mental well-being (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Trach et al., 2018). The MOCI program utilized workshops as a primary means to influence positive change within the microsystem. These workshops were carefully crafted to address various aspects of individuals' lives, such as academic and student services, social interactions, and personal relationships. MOCI leadership involvement in the participants' educational journey aided in the pursuit of their goals (Allen et al., 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015; Price, 2002). A powerful, influential mentor for all students is an adult who highly values education (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015; Price, 2002; Trach et al., 2018). The collective varied experiences attributed to the MOCI were central in contextualizing the lived experience and valuing its role in the participants lives where the phenomenon was observed (Henderson & Baffour, 2015). The SEM underpinning was helpful in making connections to uncover the findings and answer the research questions. The intense sense of brotherhood perceived by the participants was evident and demonstrated how it had a vital role in connectivity in the microsystem.

As we progress to the next system, into the mesosystem, we see the interconnections between different systems, such as the relationship between the college community and peer groups in the academic setting. The data illustrated how the participants integrated into classrooms, the mesosystem, and the importance of alignment of coordination between various systems to ensure elements of the MOCI in the microsystem cascaded into the mesosystem. Effective programs like the MOCI recognize the significance of fostering collaboration and communication among these systems to provide comprehensive support and address the diverse needs of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Henderson & Baffour, 2015).

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study uncovered four implications for practice. The first implication of this work is the need for the college to continue cultivating an atmosphere where Black men feel they are part of the community. This work highlighted the genuine feeling the participants experienced through the MOCI (Wood et al., 2015). All the participants expressed their experience of being part of a brotherhood. The brotherhood functioned as its own community to share experiences with individuals, culminating in comradery. Thus, the college should work to build a linkage from the MOCI to student services and the other student programs at the college, which are open to all students to cultivate a more inclusive community (Baber et al., 2016; Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood et al., 2015). This would enable the participants to gain total exposure to the college experience.

Secondly, this work revealed the worth of positive-oriented programming for Black men. The study explained the benefit of programming intentionally designed for

Black men (Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood et al., 2015). The second implication for practice is the need to continue to promote positive-oriented programming explicitly tailored for Black men. The engagements with these men about academic and student services outside the classroom helped them acclimate to college. Promoting positive-oriented programming explicitly tailored for Black men is essential for addressing disparities and fostering holistic development. Acknowledging and addressing the unique challenges Black men face, these initiatives can promote positive mental health, educational empowerment, and community building.

Thirdly, this work brings to light the understanding of the complicated lives of these students. Their low SES and complex family and home lives leave these students lacking academic and emotional support (Espinosa et al., 2019; Garrido et al., 2019). Institutional support aligns with an enhanced array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences learned at the community college (Baber et al., 2016; CCCSE, 2014; Harker, 1984). This work suggests the need to establish financial and emotional support. Data from the study pointed to the participants' need to feel safe and have access to emotional support. This work identified barriers the participants faced before entering the classroom.

Fourthly, and finally, additional work should take place to provide professional education for the faculty about teaching techniques for engaging diverse populations and Black men (Baber et al., 2016; CCCSE, 2014; Harker, 1984). This study suggests the need for student services to develop and adopt meaningful ways to address financial obstacles, academic advising, and mentoring for Black men focused on degree completion (CCCSE, 2014; Harker, 1984).

A framework shaped by aspirations has a positive influence. Studies show how positioning a positive narrative in programs designed for Black men is more likely to inspire and lead to positive outcomes (Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014). Advanced student programs that embed the value of the participants' families, efforts, engagement, and aspirations helped students perceive a sense of purpose that leads to persistence (Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Wood, 2013; Tinto, 1993).

The work conducted in this study suggests a significant implication for higher education practice regarding the education of Black men. Community colleges are a primary source of education for Black men due to the convenient locations, open admissions policies, and low cost (Bush & Bush, 2010; Espinosa et al., 2019; Glenn, 2003). Advanced learning is vital to secure employment in the highly competitive workforce (Blank, 2016). Therefore, the sector should focus on identifying tactics to improve persistence and completion rates for Black men. This study highlighted increased engagement through advanced programming. Higher education should continue to develop and implement policies and programs that help accomplish these goals. As Black men miss a great deal of instruction early in the K-12 school system, policies and practices are essential to address and reverse this trend. As reported in Chapter II of this study, Black boys contended with discipline in school that may overwhelmingly impact them for the rest of their lives (Davis, 2017; GAO, 2018; USDEOCR, 2014). The "push out" phenomenon involves the disproportionate practice of expulsion to Black boys; thus, lost educational instruction (Kohli et al., 2017; Smith & Harper, 2015).

America's public schools were adversely impacted due to the global pandemic. Students faced their own illness, illness to loved ones, and the threat of death to

themselves or a loved one. Higher learning was abruptly stalled due to COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of this pandemic disproportionately impacted students of color, which is why it is imperative to promote and develop advanced programs for Black men (DOEd Office for Civil Rights, 2021; Felter et al., 2021).

Lastly, the implication of this work suggests using additional enhanced strategies for retention and persistence for Black men. The work conducted by Palmer et al. (2015) introduced a model for addressing Black men at HBCUs. The model was adopted for use at HBCUs but could be adapted for community colleges. The model comprises three sections: Pre-Entry, Enrollment and Persistence, and Optimizing Student Success. The Pre-Entry stage of the model considers actions institutions can take for Black men who have been accepted to college but have not yet enrolled (Palmer et al., 2015). The Enrollment and Persistence component of the model considers actions the institution might take to help facilitate the development, retention, and persistence of Black men as they enroll and work toward degree completion (Palmer et al., 2015). The final stage, the third stage, focuses on Optimizing Student Success. Optimizing student success involves monitoring academic progress and financial need as the students persist to degree completion (Palmer et al., 2015). Thus, research should be performed to determine applicability of this model at an urban community college.

Implications for Future Research

The findings presented in this research also suggest the need for more studies investigating how Black men perceive their engagement on campus and how it translates to their academic performance. Significant attention has been given to the challenges of Black men in higher education. However, more attention is needed to determine how

advanced programming impacted the GPAs of students who participated in the MOCI. Future research should pay attention to the students' perceived experiences and how those experiences affected each student's GPA (Brooms, 2017; Brooms et al., 2017; Urias et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015). This work explained that Black men want and need communities to connect with for support and personal development. The next step is to show how these advanced programs, in addition to enhancing their interactions and relationships with peers on campus, lead to increased engagement in the classroom that translates to a positive effect on the student's GPA (Brooms, 2017; Brooms et al., 2017; Urias et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015).

Additionally, many students in America's public schools were negatively impacted due to the global pandemic. Students faced their illness, illness to loved ones, and the threat of death to themselves or a loved one. Higher learning was abruptly stalled due to COVID-19 pandemic (DOE Office for Civil Rights, 2021; Felter et al., 2021). My recommendation for institutions calls for additional research to explore the academic impact of the MOCI on the student's educational performance. This study focused on the students' perceptions and experiences as participants in the MOCI. The next frontier is gaining an understanding of how the knowledge and abilities gained from the MOCI played a factor in the student's ability to perform better in the classroom.

Implication for Institutional Leadership

The implication of this study shows the need to involve the faculty and student services in the engagement of Black men. The insinuation from this work is that Black men who do not participate in the MOCI do not experience aspects of the advanced program. The MOCI program only covers a small portion of students at the institution.

The role of college leadership in educating Black men is vital for nurturing an inclusive and equitable learning environment. College leadership must actively engage the faculty and student services to identify positive-oriented practices and tactics for ensuring that Black men have equity and access to educational opportunities. The faculty and administration should investigate practices that focus on creating positive interactions between students and faculty to develop and revise pedagogical practices to foster positive campus climates (Brooms et al., 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Harris & Wood, 2013; Smith & Harper, 2015).

The pivotal role of shaping institutional policies that directly impact the educational journey of Black men is vital and starts with Transformative leadership. Transformative leadership is an approach that causes change in individuals and social systems (Montuori & Fahim, 2010; Shields, 2010). In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive institutional change through administration, faculty, and student engagement. Transformative leadership is well suited for environments that require change; it is particularly relevant for guiding the faculty and administration through uncertainty (Shields, 2010). Transformative leadership theory compels individuals to change how they view themselves and their world (Brown, 2006; Montuori & Fahim, 2010; Shields, 2010). Transformative leadership is a powerful force for creating positive change that can advance success of Black men in higher education (Harper & Wood, 2013). Centering on equity, empowerment, and inclusivity, transformative leaders can create comprehensive support systems that address the student's academic, social, and emotional needs (Harper & Wood, 2013; Montuori & Fahim, 2010).

Conclusion

The study was informed by three research questions, which led to the answers about the perceptions and experiences of the Black men who participated in the MOCI. This transcendental phenomenology research asked how participants describe their experiences in the program. The finding shows that participants' essence was that they experienced a sense of brotherhood, valued the activities and networking, and felt supported and cared for. Well-structured programming designed to help Black men academically and personally served as a valuable resource. The study indicates that the lived experiences of Black men in the MOCI program are complex. Focusing on understanding the essence of their lived experiences identified growth in new positive experiences aided by using shared human experience at the most potent level to influence change (Bronfenbrenner, 1981; Moustakas, 1994). The study highlights the need for intentional policy interventions to support positive-oriented programming for Black men in community colleges. Increased funding and a federal commitment are essential to create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

The significance of positive-oriented programming illuminated by this study reveals its potential to catalyze positive experiences, foster personal development, and empower Black men pursuing higher education. Drawing on the findings of this work, positive-oriented programming tailored specifically for Black men holds the promise of not only individual growth but also may improve retention and graduation rates (Brooms et al., 2018; CSE, 2014; Harris & Wood, 2013; Smith & Harper, 2015). Transcendental phenomenology allowed the work to be conducted while achieving subjectivity to neutralize potential biases and preconceptions. Bracketing (Epoché) was deployed as it is

a fundamental method of transcendental phenomenology. Using Transcendental phenomenology and the SEM facilitated understanding of the essence and human experiences of this study.

References

Ahern, K. J. (1999). Ten Tips for Reflexive Bracketing. *Qualitative Health Research, 9*(3), 407–411. https://doi.org/10.1177/104 973239900900309

Allen, K., Vella-Brodrick, D., and Waters, L. (2016). Fostering school belonging in secondary schools using a socio-ecological framework. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 33*(1), 97–121. https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.5

Attewell, P., Lavin, D. E., Domina, T., & Levey, T. (2006). New evidence on college remediation. *The Journal of Higher Education (Columbus), 77*(5), 886–924. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2006.0037

Baber, L., Fletcher, R., & Graham, E. (2015). Black men attending community colleges: Examining an institutional approach toward equity. In Erin Castro (Ed.), *New Directions for Community Colleges*, (pp. 97–107). Wiley Periodicals, Inc. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20167.

Bailey, T. Jenkins, D., & Leinbach, T. (2005). *What we know about community college low income and minority student outcomes: Descriptive statistics from national surveys*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Balaam, C. B. (2019). *Assessing the level of food insecurity among students at an urban community college*. National American University.

Beach, J. M. (2011). *Gateway to opportunity? a history of the community college in the United States* (1st ed.).

Blank. (2016). What drives american competitiveness? *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 663*(1), 8–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716215600686.

Booker, K. C. (2007). Perceptions of classroom belongingness among African American college students. *College Student Journal, 41*(1), 178–186.

Brooms, D. (2018). "Building us up": Supporting black male college students in a black male initiative program. *Critical Sociology, 44*(1), 141–155.

Brooms, D. R., Clark, J., & Smith, M. (2018). *Empowering men of color on campus: Building student community in higher education*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. muse.jhu.edu/book/58366. roadmap from beginning to end (4th ed.). SAGE.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1981). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. ProQuest Ebook Central https://ebookcentral.proquest.com.

Brown, K. M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*, 700–745.

Bryan, N. (2017). White Teachers' Role in Sustaining the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education. *The Urban Review, 49*(2), 326–345. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0403-3.

Buckingham, J., Wheldall, K., & Beaman-Wheldall, R. (2013). Why poor children are more likely to become poor readers: The school years. *Australian Journal of Education, 57*(3), 190-213. doi: 10.1177/0004944113495500.

Bruening, M., Argo, K., Payne-Sturges, D., & Laska, M. (2017). The Struggle Is Real: A Systematic Review of Food Insecurity on Postsecondary Education Campuses. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 117*(11), 1767–1791. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.05.022.

Buckley, J. (2018). *Measuring success testing, grades, and the future of college admissions*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Bush, E. C., & Bush, L. V. (2010). Calling out the elephant: An examination of African American male achievement in community colleges. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 1*(1), 40–62.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2014). *Aspirations to achievement: Men of color and community colleges (A special report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement)*. The University of Texas at Austin, Program in Higher Education Leadership.

Clifford. (2019). Notes on (Field) notes. In *Fieldnotes* (pp. 47–70). Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501711954-007.

Cohen, A.M. and Brawer, F.B, (2008). The American community college (5th ed.), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2008.

Common Core Standards. (2013). Frequently asked questions. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/frequently-asked-questions/.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.

Crouch, M., & McKenzie, H. (2006). The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research. *Social Science Information, 45*(4), 483–499, https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018406069584.

Davis, C. R. (2017). “Why are the black kids being suspended?” An examination of a school district’s efforts to reform a faulty suspension policy through community conversations. *School Community Journal, 17*(1), 159–179.

Davis, J. (2015). Intrusive advising and its influence on first and second year students: A formative evaluation of a pilot intrusive advising initiative at a HBCU in the south. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/docview/1691349150?accountid=13605.

De La Garza, T. and Wood, J. L., Harris, F. (2015). “An exploratory assessment of the validity of the community college survey of men (CCSM): Implications for serving veteran men.” *Community College Journal of Research and Practice 39*.3: 293–298. Web.

DOEd Office for Civil Rights Issues Report Entitled “Education in a Pandemic – The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America’s Students’. (2021). In *Targeted News Service*. Targeted News Service.

Eby, L., Dolan, E., Hartung, P., Savickas, M., & Walsh, W. (2015). Mentoring in postsecondary education and organizational settings. In APA *handbook of career intervention*, Volume 2: Applications (Vol. 2, pp. 383–395). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14439-028.

Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J. M., Taylor, M., & Chessman, H. M. (2019). Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Race-and-Ethnicity-in-Higher-Education.pdf (netdna-ssl.com).

Fenning, P., & Rose, J. (2007). Overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary discipline: The role of school policy. *Urban Education, 42*, 536–559.

Fergusson, D. H., Horwood, L. J., & Boden, J. M. (2008). The transmission of social inequality: Examination of the linkages between family socioeconomic status in childhood and educational achievement in young adulthood. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 26*(3), 277–295.

Finnie, R. (2017). Academic advising: Measuring the effects of “proactive” interventions on student outcomes. Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. https://deslibris.ca/ID/10092327.

Felter, C. E., Cicone, J., Mathis, L., & Smith, D. L. (2021). Identifying and Addressing Social Determinants of Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Physical Therapy, 101*(11), 1-. https://doi.org/10.1093/ptj/pzab210
Garner, D. M. (2017). *Narrowing the achievement gap: A case study of one outperforming urban school making a difference*. (Order No. 10285116). Available from ProQuest Central; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection.

Garrido, R., Garcia-Ramirez, M., & Balcazar, F. (2019). Moving towards community cultural competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 73*, 89–101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.09.002.

Gearing, R. E. (2014). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*(10), 1429–1452. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304270394.

Glenn, F. (2003). The retention of black male students in texas public community colleges. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 5*(2), 115–133. https://doi.org/10.2190/GYEU-WWER-N8W7-XTBK.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Schneider, J., Hernandez, A., & Cady, C. (2018). Still hungry and homeless in college. Wisconsin HOPE Lab.
Government Accountability Office (GAO) Issued the following report: K-12 education: discipline disparities for black students, boys, student of disabilities. (2018). In *US Fed News Service*, Including US State News. HT Digital Streams Limited.

Groenewald, T. (2004). A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated. International *Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(1), 42–55.

Hannon, C. R., Woodside, M., Pollard, B. L., & Roman, J. (2016). The meaning of african american college women's experiences attending a predominantly white institution: A phenomenological study. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(6), 652-666. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fmeaning-african-american-college-womens%2Fdocview%2F1826192092%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D13605.

Hanover Research. (2014). Best practices in retention at community colleges. https://www.hanoverresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Best-Practices-in-Retention-at-Community-Colleges.pdf.

Harker, R. K. (1984). On Reproduction, habitus and education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 5*(2), 117–127.

Harper, S. (2009). Niggers no more: a critical race counternarrative on Black male student achievement at predominantly White colleges and universities. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education: *Critical Race Studies and Education, 22*(6), 697–712.

Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the national black male college achievement study*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. https://web-app.usc.edu/web/rossier/publications/231/Harper%20(2012)%20Black%20Male%20Success.pdf27

Harper, S. R., & Harris III, F. (2012). *Men of color: A role for policymakers in improving the status of Black male students in U.S. Higher Education*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

Harris III, F., Felix, E. R., Bensimon, E. M., Wood, J. L., Mercado, A., Monge, O. & Falcon, V. (2017). *Supporting men of color in community colleges: An examination of promising practices and California student equity plans*. San Francisco, CA: College Futures Foundation.

Harris, F., III, & Harper, S. R. (2008). Masculinities go to community college: Understanding male identity socialization and gender role conflict. In J. Lester (Ed.), New Directions for Community Colleges: No. 142. *Gendered perspectives on community colleges* (pp. 25–35).

Harris, F., III, & Wood, J. L. (2013). Student success for men of color in community colleges: A review of published literature and research, 1998-2012. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 6*(3), 174–185.

Henderson, D. X., & Baffour, T. (2015). Applying a Socio-Ecological Framework to Thematic Analysis Using a Statewide Assessment of Disproportionate Minority Contact in the United States. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(12), 1960-1973.

Henry, M., Watt, R., Mahathey, A., Ouellette, J., and Sitler, A. (2020). The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to congress. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2019-AHAR-Part-1.pdf.

Holcomb-Mccoy, C. (2010). Involving low-income parents and parents of color in College readiness activities: An exploratory study. *Professional School Counseling*, *14*(1), 115–124. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1001400111.

Huerta, A., McDonough, P., & Allen, W. (2018). "You can go to college": Employing a developmental perspective to examine how young men of color construct a college-going identity. *The Urban Review*, *5*0(5), 713–734. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0466-9.

Jones, K., Ferguson, A., Ramirez, C., & Owens, M. (2018). Seen but not heard: Personal narratives of systemic failure within the school-to-prison pipeline. *Taboo (New York, N.Y.), 17*(4), 49–. https://doi.org/10.31390/taboo.17.4.04.

Jones, S., & Hansen, K. (2014). Technology review: Virtual intrusive advising-supporting community college students through web-based synchronous technologies. *The Community College Enterprise, 20*(1), 88–92. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1567547044/.

Kinzie, J. & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Going DEEP: Learning from campuses that share responsibility for student success. *About Campus, 9*(5) 2-8.

Koch, Caldwell, H., & DeFanti, M. (2019). Using Brand Storytelling To Gain Competitive Advantage In Higher Education Marketing. *Competition Forum, 17*(1), 28–35.

Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The "New Racism" of K-12 Schools: Centering Critical Research on Racism. *Review of Research in Education, 41*(1), 182–202. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16686949.

Kraft-Terry, K., & Kau, C. (2019). Direct measure assessment of learning outcome–driven proactive advising for academically at-risk students. *NACADA Journal, 39*(1), 60–76. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-18-005.

Kwate, N., & Goodman, M. (2015). Racism at the intersections: Gender and socioeconomic differences in the experience of racism among African Americans. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 85*(5), 397–408. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000086.

Lundberg, C. A., Kim, Y. K., Andrade, L. M., & Bahner, D. T. (2018). High expectations, strong support: Faculty behaviors predicting Latina/o community college student learning. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(1), 55-70. doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1353/csd.2018.0004.

McGlynn, A. P. (2015). Black males and latinos: Aspiration, achievement, and equity. *The Education Digest, 80*, 57-60.

Montuori, A., & Fahim, U. (2010). Transformative leadership. *ReVision, 30*(3/4), 1-3.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research: analyses and examples. In *Phenomenological research methods* (pp. 120-154). SAGE Publications, Inc., https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.4135/9781412995658.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). Trend Generator. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/build-table/7/21?f=1%3D4&rid=50&cid=30.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Trend Generator. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/TrendGenerator/app/build-table/7/21?f=1%3D4&rid=50&cid=30.

National Center for Education Statistics (2014). Postsecondary attainment differences by socioeconomics status. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_tva.pdf.

Nelson, J. D. (2020). Relationships of (Re)imagining: Black Boyhood, the Race-gender Discipline Gap, and Early-childhood Teacher Education. *The New Educator, 16*(2), 122–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688X.2020.1739932.

Palmer, R. T., Moore, J. L., Davis, R. J., & Hilton, A. A. (2010). A Nation at Risk: Increasing College Participation and Persistence Among African American Males to Stimulate U.S. Global Competitiveness. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 1*(2), 105–124.

Palmer, R. T., Wood, J. L., & Arroyo, A. (2015). Toward a model of retention and persistence for Black men at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). *Spectrum* (Bloomington, Ind. : 2012), 4(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.2979/spectrum.4.1.02.

Parks, A. C. (2021). The arts experience at community college: A phenomenological study. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 45*(7), 517–534. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2020.1725688.

Patton, L. D., Renn K. A., Guido, F. M., & Quaye, S. J. (2016). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. (3rd ed.) Jossey Bass.

Peoples, K. (2021). *How to write a phenomenological dissertation: A step-by-step gu*ide. (1st ed.). SAGE.

Price, H. B. (2002). *Achievement matters: Getting your child the best education possible*. New York, NY: Kensington.

Rodriguez, S. L., Massey, K., & Sáenz, V.,B. (2016). Engaging latino men in community colleges: The role of student-faculty interactions. Journal of Applied Research in the *Community College, 23*(2), 21-40. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/docview/1951507888?accountid=13605.

Roscoe, J. L. (2015). Advising african american and latino students. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education, 31*(2), 48-60.

Rossman, G., & Rallis, S. (2017). Learning in the field: an introduction to qualitative research (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (3rd ed.)*. Sage.

Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Saunders, M. N. K., & Townsend, K. (2016). Reporting and Justifying the Number of Interview Participants in Organization and Workplace Research: Reporting and Justifying Interview Participant Numbers. *British Journal of Management, 27*(4), 836–852.

Schwebel, D. C., Walburn, N. C., Klyce, K., & Jerrolds, K. L. (2012). Efficacy of advising outreach on student retention, academic progress and achievement, and frequency of advising contacts: A longitudinal randomized trial. *NACADA Journal, 32*(2), 36–43. https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-32.2.36.

Shield, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: working for equity in diverse contexts. Educational Administration Quarterly, 46(4), 558-589.

Sledge, C. (2016). Socioeconomic status and its relationship to educational resources.

Smith, E. J., & Harper, S. R. (2015). Disproportionate impact of K-12 school suspension and expulsion on Black students in southern states. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Smith-McLallen, A., Johnson, B. T., Dovidio, J. F., & Pearson, A. R. (2006). Black and white: The role of color bias in implicit race bias. *Social Cognition, 24*(1), 46–73. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2006.24.1.46.

Strayhorn, T. L. & Devita, J. M. (2010) African american males' student engagement: A comparison of good practices by institutional type. *Journal of African American Studies 14*(1): 87–105.

Suh, S., Malchow, A., & Suh, J. (2014). Why did the Black–White dropout gap widen in the 2000s? Educational Research Quarterly, 37(4), 19–40.

Tautz, J. (2008). *The buzz about bees: Biology of a superorganism*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-78729-7.

Thomas, A., & Reed, J. (2007). The national urban league: Empowering black males to reach their full potential. *National Urban Leag*ue. The state of black america (pp. 217–218,265). http://search.proquest.com/docview/223586684/

Tierney, W. G., & Sablan, J. R. (2014). Examining college readiness. American *Behavioral Scientist, 58*(8), 943–946. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213515228.

Tinto, V. (1997). Classrooms as communities: Exploring the educational character of student persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 68*(6), 599–623. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ555722&site=ehost-live.

Torrens, O. D., Salinas, C., Jr., & Floyd, D. L. (2017). Examining the value of mentoring and men of color staff members of a community college. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 25*(5), 509–527.

Trach, J., Lee, M., & Hymel, S. (2018). A social-ecological approach to addressing emotional and behavioral problems in schools: Focusing on group processes and social dynamics. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 26*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426617742346.

Vang, G., Garcia, F., Vasquez, Harris, F., & Wood, L. (2017). Food insecurity and men of color. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education, 34*(20), 40–40.

Vasquez, M. C., Vang, M., Garcia, F., & Harris, F. (2019). What do I eat? Where do I sleep?: A concern for men of color in community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 43*(4), 295–306.

Urias, M. V., Falcon, V., Harris, F., III, & Wood, J. L. (2016). Narratives of success: A retrospective trajectory analysis of men of color who successfully transferred from the community college. *New Directions for Institutional Researc*h, (170), 23–33.

Walpole. M. (2003). Socioeconomic status and college: How SES affects college experiences and outcomes. *The Review of Higher Education 27*(1), 45-75.

Williams, R., & Flores-Ragade, A. (2010). *The educational crisis facing young men of color.* Association of American Colleges & Universities. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/educational-crisis-facing-young-men-color.

Wood, J. L., Palmer, R. T., & Harris, F., (2015). Men of color in community colleges: A synthesis of empirical findings. In M. Paulson (1st ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research volume 30* (1st ed., pp. 431-468). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12835-1

Appendix

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am working on my dissertation to complete my Doctorate in Education as part of Rowan University's Community College Leadership Initiative Doctoral Program. Thank you. Now, let's begin.

Interviewee Questions

1. Tell me about deciding to attend this community college?

2. Please explain what you expected of college.

3. Why did you decide to participate in the MOCI?

4. Tell me about your experiences with MOCI.

5. What is it like to be a Black male student here? Are there resources that have helped you?

6. Tell me about your interactions with MOCI faculty and staff members.

7. What do you feel the MOCI did well?

8. What changes would you make to the MOCI?

9. Would you recommend the MOCI program to help other Black male students successfully complete college? Please explain.

10. Is there anything else I should have asked about that is important to you or anything else you would like to share?

11. As I transcribe the recorded interview and review my notes, may I contact you again with any follow-up questions that I may have for you?

Before we end the interview, do you have any questions for me?

Interviewer Closing

Thank you once again for your time. I appreciate your help.