THE PLACE OF BLACK CULTURAL CENTERS IN THE LIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE MALE STUDENTS IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

ELIZABETH ZIKA. OKWUDI

Bachelor of Arts in Communication

Cleveland State University

May 1989

Master of Science in Management

Indiana Wesleyan University

April 2007

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION

at

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2021

We hereby approve this dissertation of

ELIZABETH ZIKA OKWUDI

candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Education degree in

Adult, Continuing and Higher Education

for the department of Doctoral Studies

and

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY'S

College of Graduate Studies by

_____

Dissertation Chairperson: Catherine A. Hansman, EdD

Counseling, Administration, Supervision, Adult Learning Department & Date

_____

Methodologist: Anne Galletta, Ph.D.

Curriculum and Foundations & Date

_____

Mittie Davis Jones, Ph.D.

Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs

November 19, 2021

Student's Date of Defense

© Copyright by Elizabeth Zika Okwudi, 2021

DEDICATION

Abụ Otito'm *(Igbo language*)

Kedu ịhe m ga emere Chineke?
Kedu ịhe m ga emere JEHOVAH?
Kedu ịhe m ga emere Chineke?
Kedu ịhe m ga emere Papa'm o o?
A ga'm ebuli aha ya elu!
A ga'm etobe JEHOVAH!
A ga'm ebuli aha ya elu!
A ga'm etobe Papa'm o o o o!

- Elizabeth Okwudi, 2007

My Song of Praise *(English Translation)*

What can I do for God Almighty?
What can I do for JEHOVAH?
What can I do for God Almighty?
What can I do for my Papa?
I will exalt His Name!
I will praise JEHOVAH!
I will exalt His Name!
I will praise my Papa!

I dedicate this work to my daughter Leigh Ọgụgụa *(Comforter)* Okwudi. Dear Ọgụgụa, you have been my source of comfort and motivation from birth till today. You are indeed God's gift to mankind as a First-responder Nurse. You have lived up to your Igbo name Ọgụgụa. Together, we have been through thick and thin, and you have always been there to comfort me; you can tell my story. May God the Creator *(Chukwu-Okike)* bless you and may His Will for you come to pass!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I give Honor and Glory to Almighty God Jehovah and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Had it not been for God's grace and mercy, there is no way that my dissertation would have ever been completed!

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Williams (RIP) who began this journey with me but was snatched away by death. Dr. Williams, I did it! I completed our project! I could not afford to give up because you were encouraging and watching over me from heaven. Your impact on everyone who knew you will never be forgotten. Rest in Peace.

To Mr. Prester Pickett and the Black Studies department staff, thanks for your encouragement over the years and well before my study began. Black Studies department is indeed "Home away from Home" for all who step into it.

To the generous young men who served as my participants in this study, it was an honor and absolute pleasure to work with each of you. Thank you for allowing me to probe into your experiences as African American/Black undergraduate male college students. I know that sharing your experiences will positively impact many young African American/Black men in the years to come. I also pray that your experience will help bring about positive policy and/or administrative changes to the benefit of the African American/Black population.

I also would like to thank my dissertation committee for their guidance. To my chairperson, Dr. Catherine Hansman, thank you for your encouragement and belief in me. Thank you for your ability to connect with students as unique individuals, you definitely made me feel like an individual rather than just a number. To my methodologist, Dr. Ann

Galletta, you were my professor when I first developed my topic and you guided me till my defense. Your calm demeanor and knack of prodding, results in revealing the crux of a topic. Thank you pushing me to go above and beyond. To my committee member, Dr. Mittie Jones I thank you for serving on my committee and ensuring that I included data that gave further authenticity to my study. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude to my committee.

Thank you, Dr. Joshua G. Bagakas, I began my journey during your term. I wish you were here to see me graduate. Thank you, Wanda Pruett-Butler you were a great, Administrative Coordinator for Dr. Bagakas!! Thank you all again.

Finally, I thank my Nigerian community, and in particular Mr. Sampson Tedunjaiye, his wife, Victoria Sampson, and their three children (my Godchildren), Jaiye, Iyabo, and Kemi (*Mercy*), I say THANK YOU for all your decades of support and being my family in our home away from our motherland.

Finally, if I was a "pain" to anyone at one time or another during this journey, please know that you helped me maintain my sanity, and therefore your forgiveness is highly appreciated. May God bless everyone who has played a part in getting me to this destination.

THE PLACE OF BLACK CULTURAL CENTERS IN THE LIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE MALE STUDENTS IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

ELIZABETH ZIKA OKWUDI

ABSTRACT

African American (also called Black American, or Black) students' performance in higher educational institutes reveal critical issues concerning their matriculation through higher education. A 2014 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on cohorts of university students from 2004 to 2007 showed the graduation rate of Black students was 20 percent while White students' graduation rate during the same period of time was 40 percent. African American male students had the lowest graduation rate; of all African American males who enrolled in four-year higher education institutions from 2007 to 2013, only 8 percent graduated (www.nces.ed.gov).

To support African American students, Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) also called African American Cultural Centers, were instituted around 1960 as supportive entities for Black students on many higher education predominantly White institutions (PWIs). However, in spite of the advent of BCCs on college and university campuses, the high dropout rate among the college Black student populations in predominantly White institutions (especially male students) has persisted (Harkavy & Hodges, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly White institution campus (PWI) to explore how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepared and assisted them in

negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures and enabled them to achieve academic success.

The use of instrumental case study qualitative research approach including semi-structured interviews, and study of archival documents provided insight and in-depth understanding of the issue. It revealed the answer to the overarching research question: In the context of PWIs, what meaning do African American male students enrolled in higher education give to the Black Cultural Centers or African American Cultural Centers?

The sample of five student-participants and three staff-participants (reduced from 12 participants due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic) included current Black male students, and Black male alumni who were users of this specific PWI's on-campus Black Cultural Center. Findings answered the guiding research questions and led to recommendations for enhancement of the Center's contribution to the success rate of African American male students in the PWI, while contributing to current literature.

TABLE OF CONTENT

ABSTRACT vii

LIST OF TABLES xv

DEFINITION OF TERMS xvi

CHAPTERS

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Data: Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic Period 2

Data: COVID-19 Pandemic Period 4

The On-going Status of African American Students in Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) 5

Contributors to the African American High Drop-out Rate 7

The first migration of Africans 8

The second great migration 9

The third great migration 9

The fourth great migration 11

Continuation of Slavery 11

Reason for Specific Focus on African American Male Undergraduates 13

American Higher Education 17

Inception of the Student Affairs Department 18

On-campus safe-haven for African American students 19

Problem Statement 20

Purpose of Study 21

Research Questions 22
Significance of the Study 22
Limitations of the Study 24
Summary 24
II. LITERATURE REVIEW 26
History of African Americans 30
The Origin of Black Cultural Centers in Higher Educational Institutions 32
The Role and Contribution of BCCs in Higher Educational Institutions 36
Perception of the Campus Racial Climate 42
On-campus activity and faculty engagement 45
Family and peer-pressure 45
Adaptation to course curriculum 46
Impact of context, on Blacks' coping strategy 46
Black Students Navigating Culture within PWIs 51
Revitalizing Identity for Success Through Transformative Learning 56
Summary 58
III. METHODOLOGY 59
Statement of Problem 59
Purpose of Study 60
Rationale for Qualitative Research Study Method 61
Philosophical Assumptions 62

Theoretical Framework 62
Cross's Black Racial Identity Development Theory 62
Chickering's Psychosocial (Seven Vectors of Identity Development) Theory 64
Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory 66
Rationale for Case Study Approach 69
Research Methods and Procedures 70
Site Profile 73
MCU site campus climate 74
Satisfaction: Rate of possibility to recommend MCU ….....74
Overall racial/ethnic climate …….....…...75
Social interaction between races/ethnicities ……..……..…… 75
Faculty: Being approachable and sensitive …….…….…….75
Commitment, policies, and action to improve campus climate ……..….. 76
Research Sample Selection 77
Data Analysis 78
Confidentiality, Ethical Concerns and Privacy Protection 79
Researcher's Positionality 80
Subjectivity..... 80
Method of Ensuring Trustworthiness 81
Integrity of data 81
Balance between reflexivity and subjectivity..... 82
Thick description of the content 84

Reliability and Validity 84
Credibility 84
Transferability 84
Dependability 84
Confirmability 85
Summary 85
IV. FINDINGS 87
Research Questions 88
Site Profile Recap 89
Participants' Profile 90
Student Participants 90
Max 90
Larry 91
Ross 92
Kalos 93
Drake 93
African American Cultural Center Staff Participants 94
Coordinator *(Mr. Parker)* 95
Interim Director *(Dr. Walker)* 95
Current Center Director *(Dr. Baker)* 96
Themes 96
Like home & family 98
Identity development 100

Community and culture 100
Pulled into a mindset 104
Academic and Social Resources 106
Academic success 107
Other campus activities 110
Marginalization on the PWI campus 111
Giving back 112
Motivation/Inspiration 113
Mentoring 114
Revitalization and transformation 115
Community advancement and activism 117
Racial Interaction 119
Summary 123
V. DISCUSSION 125
Research Sub-question 1 126
Research Sub-question 2 128
Research Sub-question 3 131
Answering the Overarching Research Question 133
Discussion 135
Revisiting the Research Paradigm and Theoretical Frameworks 136
Relating the Literature 136
Limitation 138
Study Implications 138

Recommendations 139
Home and parental intervention..... 140
Educational institutions..... 141
Middle school and high school 141
Higher education institutions 143
Recommendations for MCU research institute and research site 144
Recommendation for MCU administration and stakeholders 144
Recommendation for MCU Black Cultural Center management..... 147
Recommendations for future research 149
Final Thoughts.....152
REFERENCES …… 154
APPENDICES
A. IRB Submission Approval ……. 171
B. Research Site Consent Letter ……. 173
C. Prospective Research Participant's Invitation …… 174
D. Participants' Informed Consent Letter ……..…….. 176
E. Student Interview Guide/Protocol …….. 179
F. Staff Participant Interview Guide/Protocol …….……... 182

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Reported Data of Black/White Hourly Rate Between 2000 and 2018 ……..…. 4

2. 2020 NCES Report on Comparison of Salary of Fulltime Workers Ages 25-34 ……..…… 5

3. Themes and Sub-themes …….……... 97

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Academic Success: For the purpose of this study, success means achieving timely graduation (i.e., within six years from freshman status or earlier), while cultivating interpersonal skills.

Black Lives Matter: Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes (https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/).

Cultural Mistrust: "The tendency for African Americans to distrust institutional, personal, or social contexts that are controlled by Whites" (Irving & Hudley, 2008).

Campus Culture: "Persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, pp. 12-13).

HBCU: Historically black colleges and universities

Personal Development: Development of progressive characteristics and skills including leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009).

Professional Advancement: Students' ability to apply cultivated skills and be successful in educational or career endeavors which correspond with their academic degree (Cuseo, 2009).

Subculture: "Normative-value system held by some group or persons… the normative-value system of such a group must differ from the normative-value system of the larger, the parent, or the dominant society" (Bolton & Kammeyer, 1972, pp. 381-382).

PWI: Predominantly White institutions.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> *The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negros must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races"* (DuBois, 1903, p. 1).

Over one-hundred years had elapsed from the date of the above statement` by W.E.B. DuBois in 1903, and more than fifty years from when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream Speech" in 1963. Dr. King had observed and concurred with similar issue as inferred by DuBois when he (Dr. King) referred to the disappointing aftermath of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln. Dr. King insisted that since the proclamation, there had been no changes to the predicament of Blacks:

> One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One

> hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land (King, 1963).

W.E.B. Dubois (1903) had emphasized that the African American community must receive the classical education (similar education as Whites) for them to reach their ultimate capability of success by taking advantage of opportunities from events such as the Emancipation Proclamation. However, over the decades, acquiring this goal has been the challenge of a lifetime for African Americans. Drs. Dubois (1903) and King (1960) found that a strategy for improving or bridging the discrepancy between the White and the Black success is through extending the "classical education" to Blacks. Please note that for the purpose of this study, African American and Black was used interchangeably.

Mortenson (2012) found that both the levels of family income and parental education crucially impact African American students' achievement. There is an overrepresentation of the Black population in poverty.

Data: Pre-COVID-19 Pandemic

The US Census Bureau (2012) reported that Blacks comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population, and that 24 percent of Blacks within the age range of 18 to 64 live in poverty. Also, according to the 2019 report from U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2016, 31 percent of Black children below the age of eighteen lived in poverty, while the same age group of Whites living in poverty was 10 percent (www.nces.ed.gov). Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, and Brown (2015) inferred that in addition to defining the Black "class", the following factors also remain major culprits that hinder the success of the African Americans: *access, affordability, and*

attainment. This translates into a very low number of Black students graduating from college, which limits their ability and opportunity to achieve their career goals and attain higher income. Therefore, one should not overlook the close relationship between income and class.

On that note, the 2019 NCES report also showed that the graduation rate of first-time postsecondary students in the 2010-2016 (i.e., 6-year) cohort was 56 percent of Whites students and 40 percent of Black students graduated. Also, the report stated that although more female than male students of various race groups enrolled in higher educational institutes in 2016; Blacks had the widest enrollment percentile gender difference- 70 percent female to 30 percent males. In 2017 NCES posited that, 30.6 percent of Black males ages 18 – 24 were enrolled in degree-granting higher institutions between 2010 and 2016, compared to 43 percent of White males within the same time period. The Center added that two-thirds of African American students do not graduate from college.

Researchers Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013) found that in U.S. individuals who have a bachelor's degree earn 65 percent more than those with high school diplomas. In addition, the average earnings of individuals with undergraduate degree was $45,500, while that of high school graduates is only $23,900 (www.nces.ed.gov).

In breaking this down to hourly wage discrepancy, Elise Gould (2019) reported the analysis of the 2018 "Current Population Survey (CIS)" data from the Economic Policy Institute. The research report shows that wage data inequality was worsening by gender, and race. From 2000-2018, the wage gap between Blacks and Whites was widest in 2018. Furthermore, it's reported that wage growth for Black workers with college or

advanced degree saw slower growth compared to that of Whites and Hispanics. However, between 2000 and 2018 Black workers with more education saw faster growth than these with less education. Also, within this period, Whites saw at least a 7.3 percent wage growth compared to 0.5 percent for Blacks. Table 1 below shows the reported data of Black/White hourly rate during this time

Table 1

Reported Data of Black/White Hourly Rate Between 2000 and 2018

Year	High School	Some College	College	Advanced Degree
		WHITES		
2000	$18.60	$20.98	$32.15	$39.97
2018	$19,75	$21.98	$34.75	$44.46
		BLACK		
2000	$15.75	$18.02	$18.02	$34.98
2018	$15.57	$17.15	$27.46	$36.23

Note: Sample based on all workers ages 16 and older. Source**:** EPI analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata from the U.S. Census Bureau

Data: COVID-19 Pandemic Period

The 2020 NCES (the most recent report) found that of all the students enrolled in higher institution in U.S. from 2019, 37 percent were White males, and 45 percent were White females. Additionally, 33.5 percent were Black males, while 40.3 percent were Black females. Furthermore, in comparing the salary of fulltime workers ages 25-34 with reference to their educational attainment, the 2020 NCES report presented the following:

Table 2

2020 NCES Report on Comparison of Salary of Fulltime Workers Ages 25-34

Year	High School	College	Advanced Degree
	WHITES		
2016	$37,370	$53,260	$65,080
2019	$38,470	$59,600	$69,560
	BLACK		
2016	$29,650	$48,810	$63,540
2019	$29,850	$44,300	$53,540

However, the report also stated, "Caution should be used when comparing 2019 estimates to those of earlier years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates" (www.nces.ed.gov).

The On-Going Status of African American Students in Predominantly White Institutions (PWI)

Much earlier reports from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that within the 1960s and 1970s, there was a high population growth of African American students in higher education institutions. NCES also noted that the percentages tapered off between 1980 and 1990 (www.nces.ed.gov). When estimating the national student population count, NCES noted that in 1980 Black students made up 9.2 percent of the national student population in higher education, in 1988- 8.7 percent, in 1990- 8.9 percent, and 1992- 9.6 percent. However, per a 2020 NCES report, in 2019, the Black population ages 18-24 made up 37 percent of that age group national student population enrollment. NCES also furnished a report from the National Post-Secondary Student Aid

Study's (NPSAS) which tracked a cohort of 1989-1990 post-secondary African American students until 1992 (www.nces.ed.gov). NPSAS confirmed that in 1990, African Americans students made up 13.9 percent of national student enrollment in higher education, while Whites made up 71.5 percent. In addition, only 5.8 percent of these African American students completed a bachelor's degree while 84.3 percent of the enrolled White students graduated from higher educational institutions. (www.nces.ed.gov). Additional review of graduation rate of cohorts of first time Black students from 2004 to 2008 and from 2008 to 2012 showed their graduation rates at the 20 percent and 21.4 percent, respectively. Notably White students' graduation rates during these times were 40 percent and 43.7 percent respectively (www.nces.ed.gov). According to the 2020 most recent report from NCES on Bachelor's degrees conferred to males by postsecondary institutions by race/ethnicity, out of a total of 857,545 conferred Bachelor's degrees, Whites males received 516,342 conferment, and Black males received 70,811.

In a brief deviation to examine and compare the graduation rate of Black students in PWIs with that of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), a 2013 report from the UNCF Public Policy and Government affairs, shows the graduation rates (within four years) of Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) was at 32% compared to 52% for non HBCU institutions. While this might seem low, a 2018 report by Julian Wyllie in Chronicle of Higher Education indicated that Black students attending HBCUs have better chance (between 6 percent and 16 percent) of graduating in six years than those attending PWIs.

Furthermore, in a policy memo from the Progressive Policy Institutes, Ira Harkavy and Rita Axelroth Hodges (2012) concluded that American higher education needs to find a better way to improve graduation rate of diverse population groups**.** The writers infer that higher education institutions still function through hierarchical systems which favor the dominant group. Therefore, organizational cultures within higher education institutions should be scrutinized. Harkavy and Hodges (2012) see the role and future of the higher education institute as being entangled with its community. The authors claimed that institutions either help to call attention to the community's problem and/or help to solve the problem. In addition, the authors observed that research institutions are heavily involved in exploring to find solutions to the problems (Harkavy & Hodges, 2012).

Finally, to effect some change, Harkavy & Hodges (2012) charged scholars to promote civic engagement through collaboration in activities that include service learning, community outreach, partnerships, and volunteerism. The authors recommended that the government should embark on developing partnerships between the institutions and the communities in which they reside. In promoting "learning by doing," the authors mentioned several higher educational institutes who have benefitted from such local community collaboration (Harkavy & Hodges, 2012).

Contributors to the African American High Drop-Out Rate from Higher Education Institutes

Factors contributing to the high dropout rate of the African American student population (especially male students) from higher education institutions could be explained by the African American students' display of strong oppositional attitude

towards the White dominant group. This is due to the indelibly handicapping and inhumanely tragic history of Blacks, which has been kept vivid by the unceasing discrimination toward Blacks (Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994). Harper and Harris (2012) similarly noted that Black students take these ill feelings with them to college, where the campus climate makes it more difficult for them to feel like they belong. This results in low academic performance, and Black students' seeming inability to measure up to expectation.

African American history is well recapped by Ira Berlin (2010) in his book *"The Making of African American,"* a concise trip down the historical trail would clarify the background. It is necessary to revisit the contributing variables behind the decades of negative educational drop-out ratings of African American students in predominantly White institutions of higher education. As victims of three forced migrations, African Americans are portrayed by Berlin (2010) as facing a plight immersed in racial oppression in American society.

The first great migration of Africans. The first great migration consisted of the horrific trans-Atlantic passage that uprooted them from their homeland and brought them to North America during the 17th and 18th centuries. In graphic detail, Berlin evokes the horrors of shipping the slave such as the incomprehensible conditions below decks, branding, and the inconsolable grief as slaves comprehended, they would not see their families or homes again. During this migration, many Africans died, while others began a long process of internalization of anger and despair as they lost contact with everything familiar, especially a sense of place (Berlin, 2010). Upon arrival in North America, Africans were stripped of their identity and names. Families and tribal members were

purposefully separated; therefore, they experienced cultural and linguistic isolation. These were both popular tactics by slave owners to establish dominance. Through devastating adversity, slaves began a process of reconstructing families with complete strangers; they searched for commonalities amid a shared quest for "place" and security (Berlin, 2010).

The second great migration. The second great migration took place in the mid-19th century after the emancipation. This commenced from the eastern United States' seaboard moving inland, as millions of slaves experienced a forced march to fulfill the need for slave labor to support the South's burgeoning cotton industry. Families were again brutally separated; thousands also perished on the several hundred-mile forced march (Berlin, 2010). Despite the great promise of emancipation by Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, reconstruction did not fulfill the hope and promise of freedom. Rather, the post-Civil War South saw the rise of systemic segregation. African Americans were again devastated by new forms of enslavement in the forms of a corrupt sharecropping system, Jim Crow Laws, and other forms of racism (Berlin, 2010).

The third great migration. Despite longing for a place amid deep ties in the South, six million African Americans reluctantly began the process of the third great migration in the early to mid-20th century. This time they migrated to northern industrial cities with promises of steady wages and perceived economic and social mobility. However, many African Americans saw the rise of a new nightmare during the northern trip. The newcomers to the north were often offered only the lowest-paying and dangerous jobs (Berlin, 2010). Bankers and real-estate agents used many tactics to confine African Americans to crowded conditions in the poorest of neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, families were again separated as some hurried on to test the waters of locating jobs and homes. As with other movements, relationships and cultural/family traditions were often disrupted and never recovered (Berlin, 2010).

Isabel Wilkerson (2010) further expanded on the third great migration to espouse the reason for Blacks migrating to the North. Though this great Migrations started in 1915, it continued in some way till the 1970s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted better rights to Black. However, many Blacks left the South shortly due to the intensified racial tension. Wilkerson (2010) estimated that close to six million Blacks fled from the South to the North, leaving their belongings behind. Upon arrival to the North these Blacks found that they were welcomed by hatred of Blacks, though milder than in the South. Although the law prohibited discrimination against Blacks, whites sorted out the loopholes and found ways to continued discriminating against Blacks. The author inferred that the Blacks' determination and persistency enabled them to survive in spite of the odds.

Members of the Great Migration, Chicago, 1918. Credit Chicago History Museum/Getty Images (Wilkerson, 2010)

The fourth great migration. The fourth and last great migration was non-forced and occurred from the late 1960s to the present day. It was mostly attributed to the Immigration Reform Act of 1968, which was a piece of President Johnson's legislation. It enabled migration for people of color from all over the globe; and millions of immigrants came to the U.S. from Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. Berlin asserts that this fourth great migration was also triggered by the need for labor, because the fourth migration comprised of a mixture of highly skilled, educated technical labor as well as blue collar labor and even domestics. The new black immigrants to the United States arrived searching for work, opportunity, and the American Dream.

Continuation of Slavery

While this might seem to be the complete story of slavery, Douglas Blackmon (2008) on the contrary discusses the hidden and obscure detail of the continuation of slavery beyond the Civil War of 1861 to 1865, and the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln. In his book *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from Civil War to World War II*, Blackmon's (2008) investigative reporting exposed the inhuman treatment of freed Black slaves (especially males) after the Civil War, through the antebellum until World War II and beyond. The antebellum era ushered in the Abolitionist Movement and Industrial Revolution of 1820-1840, however, slavery was always the cause of disagreement. Blackmon reported that these freed men were quickly imprisoned by sheriffs in the South for breaking frivolously made-up laws. They were tortured and re-enslaved. They were sold to plantation owners, U.S. Steel Corporation and coal mining companies; thus, finding themselves back into slavery for cheap but hard labor through human trafficking.

http://www.slaverybyanothername.com/the-book/photo-gallery/

Blackmon (2008) also provided a vivid picture of these African Americans through his focus on one victim, Green Cottenham, whose ordeal represented that of hundreds if not thousands of other African American men. These men met with similar fate of being incarcerated then sold into slave labor (Blackmon, 2008). Many victims died of epidemic diseases and were buried in shallow or common graves. Blackmon added that "others were incinerated in nearby ovens used to blast millions of tons of coal brought to the surface into coke—the carbon-rich fuel essential to U.S. Steel's production of iron" (Blackmon, 2008 p. 2). An example of the dilemma of the African American freed slaves was in a letter which was received by President Theodore Roosevelt in July of 1903 from a woman who was pleading on behalf of her fourteen-year-old brother:

> "Mr. Prassident," wrote Mrs. Kinsey, struggling to overcome the illiteracy of her world. "They wont let me have him….He hase not don nothing for them to have him in chanes so I rite to you for your help" (Blackmon, 2008 p. 9).

Blackmon (2008) continued to explain such predicaments and his findings with the following statement:

> Like the vast majority of such pleas, her letter was slipped into a small rectangular folder at the Department of Justice and tagged with a reference number, in this case 12007.4. No further action was ever recorded. Her letter lies today in the National Archives (Blackmon, 2008 p. 10).

Reason for Specific Focus on African American Male Undergraduates

The choice of focusing specifically on the African America male undergraduate student population in this current research is because studies including Daugherty-Brown, 2016; Johnson III, 2015; Simmons, 2013; Harper & Quaye, 2007; and Pittman, 1994, have shown that the African American males in general fares worse than their female counterparts. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education reported that the lowest number of Black male students graduating within 4, 5, or 6 years from four-year higher education institutions occurred between 1996 and 2006. Also, in comparison, the African American male had the highest dropout rate from higher education institutions compared to their female counterparts and other ethnic groups during this period (www.nces.ed.gov). Overall, in my study to explore the place of Black Cultural Centers, in the lives of African American undergraduate male students, in Predominantly White Institutions, I found that the Department of Education's report generates less interest in specifically exploring the perspective of the male African American students, than their female counterparts.

Meanwhile, a review of a research report by Toldson and Lewis (2012) for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) shows that 12.7 million Black males

make up 5.5 percent of the entire nation's adult population, and that Black males also comprised 5.5 percent of college students, at that time. As a reflection on the foundation for college and high school performance, the report indicated that among ninth graders, 17.9 percent of Black males compared to 13.7 percent of Black females repeat a grade; 24.7 percent of Black males compared to 14.5 percent Black females are suspended or expelled; while 26 percent of Black males compared to 17 percent of Black females perform poorly in ninth grade academics, prompting parental conference (Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

Furthermore, in a partnership research by the "Young Invincibles" and "The Demos" organizations which was titled "State of Young America," it was reported that in 2009, one of every nine African American males was in jail; and one out of three African American males between ages 18 and 24 was unemployed (www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/State-of-Young-America-TheDatabook.pdf).

On that note, Michelle Alexander (2010) draws attention to the "War on Drug" which she posits that the federal drug policy targets the Black males and their communities, through mass drug incarceration and revolving poverty. She relayed that 90 percent of drug related felons are Black males, and that this results in those males' unemployment or under employment, as well as restriction of their voting rights. In turn, the unemployment and isolation from community social life due to (felony stigmatization) forces these males to return to the life of crime from which they are re rearrested and reincarcerated. Alexander classifies this as a form of Jim Crow law and system (2010).

Moreover, Johnson III and Rivera (2015) explored how applying intersectionality in the classroom generates more interaction. Firstly, in order to understand the meaning of "Intersectionality", The Equal Rights Review interviewed Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw who is an equal rights advocate. Crenshaw said, "I think of intersectionality as a term that captures the fact that systems of oppression are not singular; they overlap and intersect in the same way that power does" (Intersectionality, 2016, p. 210). In an effort to explain the term further, she used a court case as an example saying:

> "One thing that has been missing in the uptake of intersectionality is recognition that it is a relationship between identities…. The best example of intersectionality for me is *DeGraffenreid v General Motors,* a case of Black women in an industry that was racially segregated and gendered…. Most cases that involve intersectional discrimination are not adequately addressed. *DeGraffenreid v General Motors,* for instance, involved a situation where thinking of discrimination only in terms of race or only in terms of gender resulted in only a partial understanding of what was happening to Black women. The courts that heard these cases could have permitted Black women to represent themselves, and they could have interpreted the law to say that if you're protected from discrimination on any one ground of race or gender, then you're certainly protected from discrimination based on the combination of the two" (Intersectionality, p. 216).

Therefore, with regards to applying intersectionality, the authors Johnson III and Rivera (2015) posited that:

> This mutually transformative process may be modeled in the classroom when all students are encouraged to explore the ways in which they may suffer from negative ascriptions and therefore exclusion, whether on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other grounds, such as socioeconomic class… Diverse graduate public affairs classrooms include both majority and minority students, such that explorations built on mutual identification, as previously suggested, may be undertaken (2015, pp. 512-513).

Johnson III and Rivera (2015) also found that due to trait identification embraced by individuals, the stereotyping bias towards the African American male students had continued to persist. The authors opined that Black men historically have suffered discrimination and have continued to experience bias due to their race. They therefore cautioned that university faculty members must adapt sensitivity into their teaching style. This is because stereotyping individuals contributes to their limitation in assertiveness and achievements. This feeling could be internalized by the students, resulting in negative behaviors (Johnson III & Rivera, 2015).

In addition, both authors testified to their own personal experiences of stereotypical racism in exemplifying the Black male. Stereotypical racism can be traced to the time of slavery when plantation slave owners would sexually disparage the male slaves to their White wives. Black young men have since been unjustifiably perceived as dangerous. Dr. James Buehler, a clinical professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia found that when comparing Whites and Blacks from 2010 to 2014, Black individuals

were nearly three times as likely to be killed by legal intervention (i.e. by police) than White men (Buehler, 2017).

On a similar note, the following is a documentation by Funke and Susman (2016) of some high-profiled killings and fatal shootings of Black males between 2012 and 2016, which resonated across the nation: In 2016, Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old black man was killed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when a homeless man he failed to indulge called the police to the scene. In 2015, Freddie Gray at 25 years old, died from a restrain-induced broken neck while being transported in the back of a police van in Baltimore. In 2014, Michael Brown Jr., 18, was gunned down by a white policeman in Ferguson, MO., after he stole from a convenience store. Twelve-year-old Tamir Rice was also killed in 2014, when he brandished a toy gun at cops in Cleveland, Ohio. Eric Garner, 43 was killed that same year, from a chokehold during an incident with cops (Funke & Susman, 2016). Also, notable is the unfair treatment of Blacks in reported cases of inconsistency of the judicial system, as exemplified by George Zimmerman's acquittal in 2013 for killing an unarmed Trevon Martin, a black teenager as a global example of this erroneous stereotypical racism (Alverez & Buckly, 2013).

American Higher Education

Over the centuries, colonial colleges and universities have earned iconic status since the emergence of higher education in the United States of America. It is known that colonial colleges played a role in the making of the social and political history of America. The American higher educational institutions for Whites, began in 1636 with Harvard University (Schuh, et al., 2011). The White elites felt that the addition of a college affiliation enhanced their families' prestige. This is because colleges were made

responsible for grooming young men. Affluent Whites regarded higher education as insurance policy for their sons to receive literary and leadership skills, before the age of twenty (Thelin, 2004). Thus, able leadership was ensured to be passed down. The American public and academics concurred by accepting these college degrees as marks of excellence. Research has shown that one of the attractions of older colleges was their historic relationship with England, and the attempt to replicate the Oxford-Cambridge idea in America, during the Colonial Revitalization (Thelin, 2004).

Inception of the student affairs department. Thelin (2004) inferred that whereas in 1800, there were 25 American colleges, by 1860 the count had increased to about 240. At this time, only very few minority groups (women, Blacks, and Native Americans) had gained access to higher education institutions (Thelin, 2004; Schuh, et. al, 2011,). W.E.B. DuBois (1903) acknowledged the graduation of an African American from Bowdoin College as early as 1826, despite the unceasing hostile environment. Institutions evolved and redefined themselves between 1890 and 1960, as they were impacted by World Wars I and II. In 1945, the issuance of the Servicemen Readjustment Act –also known as the GI Bill - resulted in an influx of minority veterans including African American veterans, and student enrollment of specifically African Americans increased (Thelin, 2004).

Mingle (1981) indicated that the Black student population grew after WWII from 3,000 to 98,000 in the South, and that Blacks made up 8.4 percent of the total higher educational demographics. However, due to the U.S. discriminatory racial history and preconceptions, predominantly white institutions (PWIs) were less prepared for

addressing the accompanying socialization problem of the Black students who were adapting into the all-White campus culture.

Meanwhile, this continued increase in student enrollment added stress to the demand to provide "in loco parentis" services and interventions, by catering to the needs of a diverse student population (Thelin, 2004). As an intervention, a new department which would intervene and cater towards students' social development was launched, and it is now known as the Student Affairs (Schuh, et. al, 2011). Student Affairs is the supporting arm of a higher education institution.

On-campus safe-haven for African American students. Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Tuttle, Ward, and Gaston-Gayles (2004), did not mince words in describing the segregated context within PWIs. They asserted that "Black students were barely tolerated on many campuses and felt the sting of racism in class where they were simultaneously invisible and a spectacle…" (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004, p. v). Pittman (1994) used the phraseology "cultural mirror absence" (p. 104) in describing the PWIs' on-campus climate, because Whites usually did not recognize the African American heritage, nor implement ideas that would provide African American students a sense of welcome or belonging. Therefore, subsequent to the Civil Rights Act enactment in 1964, Black students in various PWIs demanded on-campus "safe havens," which are places they could call their own. Patton (2005) posits that some predominantly White institutions (PWIs) later opted to have on-campus Black Cultural Centers (BCCs).

According to Cooper (2014), Black Cultural Centers began after the students' protest in 1960. My review of the offerings at BCCs of at least six predominantly White institutions of higher education (including Cleveland State University) shows a

commonality in the purpose of the BCCs. The mission statements of all six BCCs emphasized the ultimate purpose of providing a "home- away from home" experience for Blacks, while offering a climate for open dialoguing. The Centers provided various programming and activities which promote and educate participants regarding the Black heritage.

Problem Statement

The above chronicling of the African American students' history in higher education institutes reveals a critical issue that necessitates exploring for understanding and enlightenment. The issue is that in-spite of the advent of Black Cultural Centers as supportive entities for African American students on many PWIs over the years, the high dropout rate among the Black student populations (especially male students) has persisted. Therefore, it would be helpful to examine whether the African American male students in PWIs perceive the Black Cultural Centers as being impactful in their pursuit of success; and if so, to what extent. This is crucial due to the 21st century reality that academic and professional success for all students and especially for African American students, stems from interaction within the academic and global community. This interaction is inescapable considering the inundation of technology. Hence, it is a step in the right direction to explore the BCC's role as a support system for African American students within PWI campuses.

Please note that the terms Black Cultural Center, African American Cultural Center, and BCC, are used interchangeably in this write-up.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assists these males in negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures and enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspirating for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e. the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009)).

In determining participants' academic success, I paid attention to participants' self-reporting, and self-evaluating as to whether or not they have developed skills that enabled them to successfully and gainfully navigate within the campus and various other cultures (skills such as self-confidence, ability to: interact academically with faculty and fellow students, perform internal and external networking, increase their community involvement etc.). Also, students will self-report on how important it is for them to capably step beyond their comfort zone into diverse communities (i.e., on-campus and beyond) while remaining proud of their enhanced Black self-identity and trusting their Blackness to guide them.

Research Questions

Therefore, the overarching research question is:

In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Centers or African American Cultural Center?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?
2. How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?
3. How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

Significance of the Study

The study of the Black Cultural Center in predominantly White institutions of higher education is a relatively new area and has not been explored in depth in previous research. Some scholars including Patton (2010), Richmond (2012), and Pinchback-Hines (2013) noted the BCC's positive impact on African American students' in developing and/or maintaining their self-identity on PWIs. However, in view of W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. King's challenge, this research provides current information on the status of the

problem which per DuBois "is the problem of developing the Best of this [Black] race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races" (DuBois, 1903, p. 1). On the same note, more than fifty years later the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream Speech" in which he concurred with DuBois by observing and challenging that there had been no changes to the predicament of Blacks since the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Consequently, if African American students feel that in addition to realizing and maintaining their individual Black self-identity, they are also empowered to accomplish their academic and personal goals rather than drop out, their retention rate in higher institutions might increase.

This research explored the male students' perspectives of how the BCCs go beyond fostering the students' Black self-identity to preparing them for successful competitiveness on PWI campus and beyond the Black community. The study explored if participants perceive that the BCC takes advantage of its institutionalization as a support system for Black students to encourage and guide these students through stepping beyond their comfort zone and venturing to embrace the diverse community (i.e., on-campus and beyond). This includes that these students should be capable of remaining proud of their enhanced Black self-identity and trusting their Blackness to guide them. My findings would lead to further studies on possible program development, which might help to increase the retention rate of African American male student in PWI.

In the process of this study, applicable research findings including literature on relevant theoretical and conceptual perspective was examined. Focus was on the following areas: (a) the origin of Black Cultural Centers in higher educational

institutions, (b) perception of the campus racial climate, (c) the role and contribution of BCCs in higher education institutions, (d) Black students navigating culture within PWIs, (e) and revitalizing identity development.

Limitations of the Study

Case study usually comprise of sampling from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, which is being explored, within a bounded system, and in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). This study's purposeful sampling consisted of a combination of five select African American males (down from 12 due to the 2020 pandemic), consisting of current students and alumni, from one public predominantly white institution (PWI).

Summary

Findings from this study will inform efforts to facilitate improvement and on-campus promotion of the Black Cultural Centers and other similar institutional centers. As noted from the literature reviews, the African American or Black Cultural Center might provide the needed foundational "safe haven" from which Black students could launch their higher education experience. It might also add some positive influence on the campus climate and might provide Black students with access to on-campus representational advocates, and guidance (Rankins & Reason, 2005). The presence of BCC might lead to improved assistance with Black students' adjustment; most importantly, it might improve retention of Black students (Museus, 2008). It would offer a place Black students can identify with and call their own. This safe haven would help to promote Black students' individual self-confidence and the desire to thrive.

Furthermore, many BCCs house libraries of African American history and African heritage resources, for research purposes; they also provide inspiring artworks,

mentoring and tutoring services. The BCCs are open both to the entire university community and members of the local community because it functions as a centralized "go-to" place for the preservation of information regarding African American heritage. This could be used for both research and discuss purposes. Hence, Dr. Rodney Cohen, Director of the Afro-American Cultural Center at Yale University referred to the Centers as institution's on-site "repositories of the African American experience" (Cooper, 2014, p.8).

In exploring the role of the African American/Black Cultural Center in Student Affairs, it is important to acknowledge that the main purpose of higher education institutions is to educate students academically. However, as noted previously, higher education administrators found that education without personal discipline is lacking (Schuh, et. al, 2011). Hence, for a more holistic student professional, Student Affairs divisions were instituted as the supporting arm which would provide these personal development services in higher educational institutions (2011). The history of the African American's experience in higher education has been characterized by discrimination and stereotyping. Therefore, the BCC was institutionalized to provide the needed foundation and "safe haven" for Black students.

Chapter Two will consist of literature review for the study. Though limited, literature was found in this subject area following intensive research, literature is organized under the following headings: (a) the origin of Black Cultural Centers in higher educational institutions, (b) perception of the campus racial climate, (c) the role and contribution of BCCs in higher educational institutions, (d) Black students navigating culture within PWIs, and (e) revitalizing identity development through transformative learning.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The origin of Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) or African American Cultural Centers (used interchangeably) typically situated on American university campuses, can be traced through the history of American higher education. Following the end of World War II in 1945, institutions redefined themselves due to influx of non-traditional students, after the passing of the Service Readjustment Act (a.k.a. the GI Bill) and the growing number of African American students' needs, had to be accommodated. The continued hostile on-campus environment on predominantly White institutions (PWI) resulted in the mass revolution of Black students on many PWI campuses, leading to the African American students' demand for "safe-haven"- a place on the campus they could call their own. Gradually many institutions yielded and agreed to develop BCCs.

However, the continued high drop-out rate of African American students in PWIs did not seem to improve despite the development of BCCs. Notably striking is the U.S. Department of Education's report in 2009 that the African American male students had the highest dropout rate compared to female African American students and other ethnic groups (www.nces.ed.gov). Therefore, since BCCs were institutionalized as a "safe haven" for Black students, a study to explore and understand their current role in African

American students' success (especially male students) is warranted. As I stated earlier in this proposal, this research is greatly needed due to my recent findings. In the course of my research exploration on the place of Black Cultural Centers in the lives of African American undergraduate male students in Predominantly White Institutions, I found that the Department of Education's reports showed less interest in the coverage of male African American students, than in the female Black students.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assists them in negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures and enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspirating for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e., the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009)).

In determining participants' academic success, I paid attention to participants' self-reporting, and self-evaluating as to whether or not they have developed skills that enables them to successfully and gainfully navigate within the campus and various other cultures (skills such as self-confidence, ability to: interact academically with faculty and fellow students, perform internal and external networking, increase their community involvement etc.). Also, students self-reported on how important it is for them to capably step beyond their comfort zone into diverse communities (i.e., on-campus and beyond);

while remaining proud of their enhanced Black self-identity and trusting their Blackness to guide them.

The following are the guiding research questions to be addressed, beginning with an overarching question:

In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Centers or African American Cultural Centers?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?
2. How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?
3. How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

In line with Merriam and Simpson (1995), the literature review is "a narrative essay that integrates, synthesizes, and critiques…research on a particular topic" (Merriam & Simpson 1995, p. 41). Most recently, Taylor and Snyder (2012) concurred with the following:

> Literature reviews help scholars distinguish research informative to a particular construct; they synthesize significant findings, help identify areas of concern and questions yet to be explored, and potentially provoke the status quo, challenging the field to question or rethink what is often unquestioned (Taylor & Snyder 2012, p. 37).

This chapter examines research and literature related to Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) in predominantly White higher educational institutions (PWI), as it relates to undergraduate African American male students. This literature review covers the following topic areas: (1) History of African Americans, (2) The origin of Black Cultural Centers in higher educational institutions, (3) Perception of the campus racial climate, (4) The role and contribution of BCCs in higher educational institutions, (5) Black students navigating culture within PWIs, and (6) Revitalizing identity for success through transformative learning,

Increased interest in this area is heightened by articles such as Harper and Harris' (2012) report in "Men of color: A role of policymakers in improving the status of Black male students in U.S. higher education", that two-thirds of African American students do not graduate from college. Also, graduation rate of cohorts of first time Black students from 2008 to 2012 showed national college graduation of Black students at the 21.4 percent, while White students' graduation rate during this time was 43 percent (www.nces.ed.gov).

History of African Americans

In light of the reports from various authors including the above Taylor and Snyder (2012), and Harper and Harris (2012), care should be taken not to disregard the history of African Americans which plays a crucial role in their lives to the present day. Ira Berlin (2010) pays homage to the often-told slavery narrative in his book. He narrated the concepts of moving from place to place as it relates to destruction of dreams and restoration of hope-filled persistency of African Americans. As explained in Chapter One, Berlin (2010) described the African Americans' plight, beginning with their shackled journeying from Africa up to their unresolved search for a place they could call home. He grouped these periods into the four great migrations.

The first forced migration from Africa was during the 17th and 18th centuries when Africans were forcefully shipped from the coast of West Africa to America as slaves. The second forced migration was in the mid-19th century when the slaves were forcefully moved around to meet the demand for slave labor in America. The mid-19th century introduced the emancipation by Abraham Lincoln, and the third forced migration. The freed slaves migrated to northern industrial cities, only to be disappointed with low wage jobs, family separations, and inability to own homes. The fourth migration began from the late 1960's to the present day, and involves *non-forced* migration of people of color from all over the world to the U.S.

It should be noted that throughout his narration of the four great migrations, Berlin (2010) also touched heavily on the challenges the 'new' African American faces in the form of the identity crises they experienced. As slaves new to America, they searched for identity and self-expression and African Americans found strength in

solidarity. Berlin contends that factors from this melancholic experience have been major contributors to present cultural mistrust and oppositional attitude of African Americans, towards the White culture (2010).

In their contribution to the Black students' performance in higher education Harper and Harris (2012) expressed that "Many Black undergraduate men bring with them to college educational histories that are often blemished by low expectations for their success in school and society, insufficient exposure to Black male teachers, and culturally unresponsive curricula and teaching methods" (p. 3). Therefore, the solution for the African American's present educational predicament must consider the influence and impact of the African Americans' history on the students' world view.

In his 2013 study on factors that increase persistency of African American, Lamont Simmons concurred with Rowser (1997) that African American students do not drop out of college as a preconceived motive. In this regard, the U.S. Department of Education's report in 2017 stated that:

> Between 2000 and 2016, the percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds who had completed at least a high school diploma or its equivalent increased for those who were White (from 94 to 95 percent), Black (from 87 to 91 percent) …. Between 2000 and 2016, the percentage of White 25- to 29-year-olds who had attained at least a high school diploma, or its equivalent remained higher than the percentages of Black and Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds who had attained this education level. However, the White-Black attainment gap at this education level narrowed from 7 to 4 percentage points over this period. (www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2017, p. 43)

Simmons (2013) like Rowser in 1997, confirmed that many institutions have programs in place, such as learning communities, and mentoring, to help provide intervention to students. Simmons maintained that there is still great need for higher institutions to do more in their quest to retain African American students.

While researching for relevant literature to the current study, it became apparent that not much research has been conducted concerning African American undergraduate male students' perspectives of how (if at all) the African American or Black Cultural Centers prepare and assist them to maneuver and competitively negotiate the PWI campus-cultures and excel in their undertakings with confidence. Therefore, other applicable research findings including literature on relevant theoretical and conceptual perspectives were examined. Focus was on the following areas: (a) the origin of Black Cultural Centers in higher educational institutions, (b) perception of the campus racial climate, (c) the role and contribution of BCCs in higher educational institutions, (d) Black students navigating culture within PWIs, and (e) revitalizing identity for success through transformative learning.

The Origin of Black Cultural Centers in Higher Educational Institutions

The American higher educational institutions began with Harvard University which was founded in 1636; College of William & Mary, founded in 1693; and Yale University, founded in 1701. In 1800 there were 25 American colleges; by 1860 the number had increased to about 240. Also, between 1800 and 1860, minority groups (women, Blacks, and Native Americans) began to gain access to higher educational institutions (Thelin, 2004; Schuh, et. al, 2011).

Institutions evolved and redefined themselves between 1890 and 1960, as they were impacted from World Wars I and II. In 1945, the issuance of the Servicemen Readjustment Act (also known as the GI Bill) resulted in an influx of students and an increase in both White and Black student enrollment numbers. By 1947, 2,230 million out of 15,440 million US veterans, went to college to further education (www.military.com/). This on-going increase in student enrollment, caused additional stress on the institutions. There was great demand to provide "in loco parentis" services and interventions which would cater to the needs of a growing population of students. Therefore, the Student Affairs division was founded (Schuh, et. al, 2011) in institutions of higher education. The Division now houses departments such as Campus life, Counseling, Diversity and inclusion, Sports and Recreation etc.

Furthermore, Mingle (1989) cited the *Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board*'s 1978 report that of the 84,000 Blacks in higher education institutes in 1960, only 3,000 had enrolled in PWIs. However, this number had increased according to the Board's 1980 report. The report listed that of the 245,000 total-number of Black students in 1970, 98,000 of them were enrolled in PWIs in the South. Black students made up 8.4 percent of the total national higher education demographics at that time. It is necessary to emphasize, that although the African American minority group gained access to institutions, the PWIs found it an arduous task to accommodate them, considering the institutions' racial history of exclusion of the African American population (Mingle, 1981).

At the end of WWII, the quest to desegregate schools in the South intensified. Ultimately schools became gradually desegregated in various states. These schools

included the University of Georgia, in 1961; the University of Mississippi, in 1962; the University of Alabama, in 1964 and the University of South Carolina, in 1963 (www.tolerance.org). Mingle (1981) also posited that from the on-set of desegregation of higher education institutions, the PWIs were less prepared to address the accompanying socialization problem of Blacks. This in turn resulted in Black students conjuring the spirit of civil disobedience and creating avenues for social and political change on campus (Patton, 2005). This was when Black students demanded on-campus "safe-haven" (Mingle, 1981).

Patton (2005) inferred that following the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and due to the continued perception of hostility from rejection and social isolation within PWI campuses, Black students on various institutional campuses began demanding a "safe-haven", a cultural space to call their own (Patton, 2005). In this regard, Pittman in his earlier study (1994) had referred to this hostility as emanating from the "Cultural mirrors absence" in predominantly White institutions. The students needed validation for their experience and presence on campus.

Further aggravation was caused when in 1967 the University of North Carolina (UNC) reported that of its 13,352 student-population, only 113 were African American. This news, coupled with the undercurrent segregation and discrimination on campus, ignited the UNC Black students' revolution. The students' revolution led to the launching of the on-campus Black Students Movement (BSM) in November of 1967. The Black Students Movement later submitted a 22-page memorandum to UNC's administration, which included a demand for a Center (https://sites.google.com/site/uncblackstudentmovement/about-bsm/history).

In addition, during this time of the Civil Rights Movement, Purdue University reported that, only 129 out of its 20,176 students were African American. As a chain reaction, in 1968, there was a similar revolution by the Black students at Purdue University. In their quest to foster improvement of Black students' lives on campus, Purdue Black students submitted a nine-demand memorandum to their institution's administration (http://oldsite.lib.purdue.edu/spcol/orthefirenexttime/index.html). One of the common demands from both University of North Carolina and Purdue University was for the establishment of a Black Cultural Center on campus, "a safe haven" for Black students.

The activities and events of the time, including the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the launching of the Black Power and Black Art movement, caused several PWI administrations to seriously consider designating "safe havens" for Black students. Cooper (2014) posits that Black Cultural Centers began after the students' protest in the late 1960. Of the various institutions that experienced the Black students' revolution, the first Black Cultural Center was created in Rutgers University in 1967. This was followed by Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and University of Iowa in 1968. Purdue University administration's taskforce responded in 1969 to create a Center, and Purdue University's Black Cultural Center was founded and built in 1970 (oldsite.lib.purdue.edu/spcol/orthefirenexttime/index.html).

Other BCCs emerged within this time frame as well. The Black Cultural Center in Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA, was also founded in 1970 following intense deliberation between the institution's then President Robert Cross and members of the project's steering committee (www.swarthmore.edu/black-cultural-center/our-history-

formation-center). In 1983, Berea College, Berea, KY, established its Black Cultural Center. The Community Mixer, one of Berea's BCC programs, is always held during the College's Orientation Week. This is usually an opportunity to welcome new students of color and introduce them to the diversity within the College campus (www.berea.edu/bcc/). In addition, the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center in Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN was opened in 1984; and was named after the first African American student who enrolled in the institution (the student's name was indeed Bishop Joseph Johnson). Vanderbilt University was founded in the spring of 1873 (www.vanderbilt.edu/bcc/facilities/). Furthermore, following prolonged negotiation, the Stone Black Culture Center at University of North Carolina (UNC) was established on July 1, 1988. The institution's historical write-up states that, "Upon its inception, The Stone Center focused its attention on raising awareness of and appreciation for African American culture by the campus community" (https://sites.google.com/site/uncblackstudentmovement/about-bsm/history).

Evidently, the establishment of BCCs on many PWI campuses was a great accomplishment for Black students. However, this was only the beginnings of a greater work to do in their quest for survival and acceptance, on PWI campuses. The next section discusses how Black students who attend PWIs perceive the campus racial climate.

The Role and Contribution of BCCs in Higher Educational Institutions

It is known that the main purpose of higher education institutions is to educate students academically (Schuh, et. al, 2011, Thelin, 2004). However, higher educational institution administrators soon found that education without personal discipline is lacking in professionalism. Hence, for a more holistic student professional, the Student Affairs

division was instituted as the supporting arm to provide these personal development services in higher educational institutions (Schuh, et. al, 2011). Considering the history and revolution of the African American students on PWI campuses, and due to discriminatory isolation, the BCCs were instituted to provide the needed base, "home away from home" and "safe haven" from which Black students could foster launching their higher educational experience.

Many PWIs including Purdue University, Ohio State University, and University of North Carolina, have discussed the contributions of Black Cultural Centers to higher education. They acknowledged that the presence of Black Cultural Centers on campus has led to increased recruitment of African American students. BCC assists with Black students' on-campus adjustment which most importantly results in improved retention (Museus, 2008). Also, according to Rankins and Reason (2005), BCCs add some positive influences on campus climate.

The BCCs contribute to participants' development by functioning as the centralized "go-to" place for the preservation of information regarding the African American heritage. Dr. Rodney Cohen, Director of the Afro-American Cultural Center at Yale University agrees with this opinion, because he refers to the Centers as their individual institution's on-site "repositories of the African American experience" (Cooper, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, BCCs might promote community engagement/enrichment, and education. These are avenues for diverse groups to learn more about Black culture and, improve interaction among different ethnicities. Having a place Blacks can call their own, promotes their self-confidence and the desire to thrive in PWI (Cooper, 2014).

Higher education institutions have acknowledged that the presence of Black Cultural Centers on campus has led to higher recruitment in the number of African American students, better assistance with Black students' adjustment; and most importantly, improved retention (Museus, 2008). The Centers provide centralized location on campuses for rare scholarly information on Black heritage. The BCC's connections to the local community provide opportunities for internship or cooperative education (Co-op) and, other experiential learning. Bower and Ketterhagen (2004) found that institutions which champion diversity-focused programming usually report more success in positive minority student engagement. Many BCCs house libraries of African American History and African heritage resources for research purposes as well as history inspiring artworks, mentoring, and tutoring services. These are avenues for diverse groups to learn more about Black culture and, improve interaction.

My previous unpublished study (Okwudi, 2013) reviewed the offerings of at least five Black Cultural Centers on campuses of higher educational institutions including, Purdue University, University of North Carolina, Cleveland State University, Ohio State University, and University of Cincinnati, showed a commonality in the purpose of their BCCs (Okwudi, 2013). As was earlier described in the "The Origin of Black Cultural Centers in Higher Educational Institutions" section of this chapter, showed that these institutions' mission statements emphasized the ultimate purpose of providing a "home-away from home" experience for Blacks, while offering a climate for open dialoguing.

The importance of the contribution of a BCC is well conveyed in a YouTube documentary sponsored by Purdue University and moderated by Renee Thomas, Director of Purdue University's Black Cultural Center at Purdue University. The documentary

explores the history and positioning of Purdue's BCC within the institution's culture; while students gave testimonials, which affirmed the influence that the presence of the BCC had in their choice of higher education institution to attend. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eW2osIsPIM&feature=player_embedded).

The documentary indicates that from its original dedication in 1970 as the "Black House", it was a place for Black socialization. The now changed Purdue Black Cultural Center which opened in 1999 is described as "a testament to the African American culture. A vibrant refuge, a rich resource, a joyful meaningful celebration of the Black experience". The BCC is strategically located on Purdue campus (not at the backside) and replicates Afrocentric appeal which captures the history of the African Americans. The BCC and its programs are open to all students and not only to Black students. It has conjured pride in African American students.

In addition to functioning as a place for socialization, Purdue's BCC delivers student educational programming, which are combination of speaker forums, art displays, and various performing art ensembles. Students have opportunities for activities such as out of state tours, and outreach programs for school children within the community. Bill Caise, the Assistant Director of Purdue's BCC, contends that these opportunities are developed through collaborations with the YWCA, participation in performing art ensemble etc. This process of giving back to the community enhances the students' leadership skills, resulting in the children's thinking more positively of attaining higher education to prepare them for global interaction (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eW2osIsPIM&feature=player_embedded).

Students' testimonials reveal that joining the Center's ensembles help them to release stress, while building their confidence. Their statements also confirmed that the presence of the BCC was a deciding factor for some students in selecting the institution, because the Center might provide a symbolic second home for the students. Furthermore, not only does the Center's programming engage students, but it also helps to increase the Black student retention rate, and their aspiration towards graduate programs. Student participants in BCC programs show remarkable transformation from timidity upon first year arrival, to competent mature humans and competent professionals at graduation (www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eW2osIsPIM&feature=player_embedded).

This positive change experienced by Black student participants of BCCs was confirmed during a previous research exploration of the African American Cultural Center in one PWI within Northeast Ohio (Okwudi, 2013). According to the Coordinator of the institution's BCC, he confirmed that the Center offers six programs: Umoja Round Tables, The Black Studies Ambassadors, The Colloquium Series, Bridges to Africa Panel Discussions, and the Kuumba Arts Programs. He also said that some of these programs invite educational interactions with local community members and businesses, which enrich students' academic, personal, and professional growth (Okwudi, 2013). For instance, one student study participant who was interviewed confirmed that such interactions had resulted in his entrepreneurship as a local disc jockey (DJ). He said that his business has been thriving.

Patton (2006) seeing that little or no empirical studies had been conducted to sustain the assertion of what Black Cultural Centers (BCC) contributes to Black students, decided to investigate the issue. Her study of how Black students make meaning of

interactions within BCC, is a foundation work and uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as framework. From her studies, Patton found that despite the past several decades, Black students in higher education continue to feel the pressure of not belonging which originated before the 1960's. Therefore, she asserted that her use of the CRT framework enables readers to recognize racism as a persistent everyday occurrence, while the challenge for change continues (Patton, 2006).

In addition, Patton (2006) referred to Cross' "Model of Psychosocial Nigrescence" (1991) as a healthy social identity development, because he also stresses race salience. Patton suggested that the congruency between a person, their environment, and their race salience, determines the person's life view and how they fit within their environment (2006). Therefore, with the experience of slavery, it is difficult if not impossible for Blacks to experience a high level of race salience, hence validating the importance of centers such as the BCCs. She concluded that the Black Cultural Centers indeed provided Black students with a sense of ownership, belonging and recognition of the Black heritage; therefore, the students referred to the BCC as their home, safe space, and academic social outlet (Patton, 2006). While agreeing with Patton's (2010) acknowledgement of what the Centers represent to the Black male student users, my research sought to elaborate the issue further by exploring one of my research questions: How does the Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?

The presence of Black Cultural Centers on campus has led to higher recruitment in the number of African American students. It has also provided notable assistance with Black students' adjustment and retention rate. These students view the Center as a source

of pride and dignity; they refer to it as "home- away from home". The next section discusses the differences *within* the Black student population within individual PWIs. This is a necessary fact which is usually overlooked by generalizing all Black student population as a monolithic group.

Perception of the Campus Racial Climate

While reviewing why African Americans male seem to gravitate towards academic failure, Irving and Hudley's (2008) concurred with the following definitions that differentiate between ethnic and racial identities. He posited that "Ethnicity", is a group of people with common ancestry or location, custom and practices; while "Race" referred to a group defined by physically identifiable characteristics (Irving & Hudley 2008). Although there are other definitions of Ethnicity and Race, the above definitions grounds my research study because the definitions reveal the escapable classification and easy recognition of African Americans, increases their inclination towards marginalization.

Furthermore, along with other biased infringements, the African American males struggle with developing their racial identity within the American society (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Therefore, due to historical experience of marginalization, African Americans (especially the male) are found to have "cultural mistrust and oppressional cultural attitude" (2008, p. 681) against the dominant group. This manifests as African American's Anti-White attitudes, including the rejection of (White) society's norm of educational success, which may result in their conforming to academic failure instead. According to Irving and Hudley (2008), most Blacks would rather excel in non-academic fields such as sports and athletics, than in academics. In line with Hudley's conclusion,

Johnson (2017) noted that a review of the poor academic success rate of African American males reveals that Black male students are usually critiqued from the "White gaze" perspective. This perspective includes misconstruing of the Black linguistic and cultural pedagogy, which is different from the White norm. The author added that scholars such as James (2015); Paris and Alim (2014); Johnson (2011); Morrison (1992) and Du Boise (1903) also posited that perspectives such as the "White gaze" instigate stereotypical categorization of Black males as academic failures right from start, hence their seeming disenchantment with education (as cited in, Johnson, 2017, pp. 578-579).

Meanwhile, literature shows that scholars including Rowser (1997) and Simmons (2013) noted that all good intentioned proactive institutions strive to deliver intervention services to identified students within the first three weeks of their arrival on campus, aiming to promote student retention. However, the authors also indicated that institutional services are usually designed from the perspective of the institutions. Students' opinions are usually not solicited for, especially Black students' opinion (Rowser, 1997; Simmons, 2013).

Rankins and Reason (2005) claim that the climate of an institution affect students' performance, as well as their personal and social development. They also posited that students of color experienced more harassment, hostility, and intimidation on campus; because college is where most students first experience or encounter other racially diverse populations (Rankins & Reason, 2005). The authors observed that majority of White college faculty members are not supportive of substantially expanded multicultural policies and programs. In addition, a higher percentage of Whites than African Americans described the campus as positive (Rankins & Reason, 2005). Therefore,

Rankins and Reason (2005) recommended that there must be a redirection of perspective by institutions' administrators in facing the challenges of ethnic minority students, for campus environment to be positive (Rankins & Reason, 2005).

Furthermore, a survey by Rowser (1997) showed that many African American "regular" (i.e. non-Honor-roll or Scholar program participant) high school graduates enthusiastically arrive to college feeling adequately prepared to tackle their academic classes and achieve high GPAs. However, the reality is that most are placed in remedial courses because of real-life assessment of their college readiness. To many African American students, being placed in remedial courses makes them feel stigmatized in the eyes of their peers. This is more drastic for the African American males, because their embarrassment and feelings of not being good enough may kindle thoughts of hopelessness, which easily induces their dropping out of higher education institutions (Rowser, 1997; Harper & Harris, 2012).

Bower and Ketterhagen (2004) posits that although Black students proceed to higher education with the intention to succeed, 56 percent of African Americans, compared to 36 percent of Whites, do not graduate from college. Similarly, in 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) reported that two-thirds of African American students do not graduate from college. This followed their release that the graduation rate for the 2008 to 2012 cohort was 21.4 percent for Blacks, compared to 43.7 percent for Whites. However, the 2019 NCES report showed some improvement in that the graduation rate of first-time postsecondary students of the 2010-2016 (i.e., 6-year) cohort was 56 percent of whites and 40 percent of Blacks graduated. (www.nces.ed.gov).

On-campus activity and faculty engagement. Harper and Harris (2012) states that:

> "Many Black undergraduate men bring with them to college educational histories that are often blemished by low expectations for their success in school and society, insufficient exposure to Black male teachers, and culturally unresponsive curricula and teaching methods" (2012, p. 03).

On the other hand, Simmons (2013) found that Black students who are socially integrated through campus involvement and/or maintain invaluable engagement with minority faculty, are more successful in predominantly White institutions (PWI).

However, engaging with Black faculty poses a rarity since according to US Department of Education in 2010, fulltime Black faculty made up 5.4 percent of the national count of all fulltime faculty, and the number dropped in 2011 when only 4 percent of U.S. faculty were Black (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). However, as noted by Harper and Quaye (2009), in the absence of many Black faculty members available to engage with Black students, student organizations are good avenues for networking with peer and faculty, and membership helps motivate the African American students' retention. This was also affirmed by the participants (mostly male) of the Harper and Quaye's 2009 study. The participants indicated that participation in clubs and contemporary (i.e., non-Black-specific) organizations was very helpful in their retention and maintaining their academic aspirations.

Family and peer influence. Bower and Ketterhagen's (2004) study found that while in school, many Black students usually maintain contact and deep involvement in solving family and friends' problems. In cases such as these, family and peer-pressure

interfere with their studies by causing distraction, lack of time management, and in serious cases may result in dropping out of the university. However, on a positive note, authors such as Ogbu (2003), Harper and Quaye (2007) and Daugherty-Brown (2016) posits that some Black students who are raised in a low poverty neighborhood or to educated parents, or who receive wrap-around support, are usually positively influenced by family and peers who motivate them to graduate and succeed.

Adaptation to course curriculum. Higher educational institutions typically develop most curricula based on recommendations from "stakeholders", such as the trustees, faculty/ staff, alumni, and the state government (where applicable). Therefore, since many Blacks students attend PWIs (especially the males), they must develop coping skills to enable them to go the extra mile and become successful in PWI.

Bower and Ketterhagen (2004) found that the ability of Black male students to adapt and reframe their perspectives, positively impacts their level of academic success. The authors inferred that, even though African American students may have a close-knit network of Black friends on the PWI campus, this network does not provide them the breakthrough for social introduction and/or access to opportunities for closer interaction with faculty, like a similar network would do for White students. Meanwhile, little research has examined how African American students in PWIs feel that on-campus Black Cultural Centers prepare and assist them to successfully embrace the unfamiliar and uneasy campus environmental climates, while striving to achieve their ultimate goals.

Impact of context, on Blacks' coping strategy. Researchers Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli (2000) conducted a study with 213, participants to see if African American students in higher education use the same coping methods as was predicted

earlier by Feagin (1991) when he found that the African Americans' response to racial discrimination usually depended on the context. For instance, in public environments most Blacks' respond to various personal encounter with avoidance, whereas similar encounters in private may result in a counterattack response. Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, and Cancelli, also concluded in their 2000 study, that the "Avoidance" coping strategy (i.e., refraining from situations that are prone to trigger attacks) proved to be the most used strategy by Blacks, in coping with racism and discrimination. This strategy is followed by the seeking-social-support strategy. The strategies of avoiding and/or escaping from discriminatory environments, seem to help African Americans in managing their stress and maintaining basic life satisfaction (Utsey et al., 2000). The use of the avoidance strategy is also evidenced by the high dropout rate of the African American students, due to their lack of motivation and/or their ill-prepared abilities to cope within PWI climates. Therefore, it is imperative to explore if the students perceive their campus BCC as assisting them in battling the dropout self-fulfilling prophesy.

In their study on several cultural compatibility theories, Whaley and Noël (2012) found that cultural identification boosts the personal identity of African American youths, which could pave the way to their greater academic achievement. Also, in an earlier work by the co-author Whaley, he identified the following as three components of African American "cognitive schemata": (1) individual self, (2) cultural self, and (3) societal roles. He opined that the schemata create a sense of balance that supports academic achievement (Whaley 2003). In addition, the 2001 work by Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfris, and Harpalani; which involved 562 African American students, found that higher self-esteem derived from positive sense of self or "Proactive Afrocentricity", is related to high

achievement, whereas a high "Eurocentricity" is related to low achievement (Spencer et al., 2012).

Owen-Sabir (2007) conducted a notably surprising study, on the impact of delinquency, social bonding, and self-control on academic achievement of African Americans. From a surprising tangent, the study strangely revealed that African Americans were the only group whose self-esteem was positively impacted by delinquency. This implies that nonconformity, defiance, and self-handicapping strategies (including school dropout) are methods of increasing self-esteem amongst African Americans (2007).

In their earlier study Oyeserman, Gant, and Ager (1995), examined the role of social organizations in African American students' academic and personal development-with a focus on predominantly white institutions. The scholars inferred that African American youth derive the motivation for academic excellence and coping with racism through support from their collectivist culture (Oyeserman et al., 1995). Participants for the qualitative study were selected because of emergence of the issue from discussions of various focus groups, among whom 45% were male and 55% were female; from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior levels. Targeted interviews revealed the barriers and difficulties faced by black students, notwithstanding the type of experiences from their home communities, whether they came from mostly Black, or White communities. This agrees with Feagin's 1991 assertion that:

> It seems likely that most black men - including middle-class black men see white police officers as a major source of danger and death….Scattered evidence suggests that by the time they are in their twenties, most black

> males, regardless of socioeconomic status, have been stopped by the police because "black- ness" is considered a sign of possible criminality by police officer….I have examined the sites of discrimination, the types of discriminatory acts, and the responses of the victims and have found the color stigma still to be very important in the public lives of affluent black Americans…. interviews indicate that deprivation of full enjoyment of public facilities is not a relic of the past; deprivation and discrimination in public accommodations persist. Middle-class black Americans remain vulnerable targets in public places (Feagin, 1991, p. 114).

Similarly, a study conducted by Guiffrida (2003) showed that although the mission statements of various on-campus Black student organizations were different, they provided members with a sense of belonging and comfort zone- a place to engage in the Black culture devoid of stereotype. The author posited that these organizations also provided opportunities for peer mentoring, and easier access and interaction with black faculty. Membership promotes a desire among the students to give back to the Black community, both within the institution and its surroundings. This integration, helps foster good relationship with faculty, breaks down stereotypical biases such as achieving good grade, and promotes positive sense and acceptance of their “Blackness”, or Black identity (Guiffrida, 2003).

In her phenomenological study on African American higher education male students’ success, Daugherty-Brown (2016) was incited because gaining insight into the tools used by academically successful Black males would be a key to increasing the

success rate of African America male students. Daugherty-Brown's study samples were former participants in the BW Scholar program. This was a collaborative program between Baldwin Wallace University and one of its partner school districts. The program consisted of Black male high school students from hard-to-serve neighborhoods who were recruited in their ninth grade, and provided with "mentoring, academic enrichment and career readiness opportunities throughout their high school years in preparation for some sort of post-secondary enrollment" (Daugherty-Brown, 2016). Thereafter, any of the scholars who decides to attend Baldwin Wallace University upon graduation are readily admitted with free tuition.

All of Daugherty-Brown's eight student participants were alumni of the BW Scholar program, and at least third year students at Baldwin Wallace University. Her five criteria for student success were: Student Retention, Educational Attainment, Academic Achievement, Personal Development, and Student Advancement. Per Daugherty-Brown:

> The BW scholars program aims to ensure that its participants have the academic support and enrichment, mentoring and career preparation components in place to get Scholars to their high school commencement and onto college…. The program selects a cohort of African American male students right before the start of their ninth-grade year and remains with them until they graduate…. The hand-picked participants were considered at risk for many reasons, including poor grades, spotty attendance, scrapes with the law and tough home lives. Participants in the program receive; academic enrichment, mentoring and leadership development, career preparation and internships, and opportunity for full

scholarship to Baldwin Wallace university (Daugherty-Brown, 2016, pp. 7-13).

The author's study participants reported that they had remained determined by concentrating on achieving success, despite highly distractive challenges they encountered. The students attributed their success to participation in the BW Scholar. Therefore, like Harper (2005, 2012), (Strayhorn, 2013) and others, Daugherty-Brown (2016) acknowledged that positive family support, spirituality, involvement in on-campus activities through social integration, involvement with faculty mentors, and grit, have been found to increase the retention and academic success rate of Black male students in PWI's.

Furthermore, it has been found that African Americans, especially the males, struggle with developing their racial identity. This has also resulted in many of them developing mistrust and oppressional cultural attitudes, even on campuses. However, prior participation in academic enrichment programs and/or involvement in on-campus activities through social integration, has been found to increase the retention and academic success rate of Black male students in PWI's. The next section will discuss the role that on-campus interactions, and involvement in organizations (including the BCC) plays in Black students acclimating in higher educational Institutions.

Black Students Navigating Culture within PWIs

From the U.S. Department of Education (2010a, 2010b), reports, African American males comprise 36 percent of the entire count of Black student population in higher education. They also make up 4 percent of the national higher education

enrollment. Thirty-three 33 percent of Black males in four-year institutions graduate within six years. While other factors such as, socio-cultural, economic status and under-preparedness are usually cited as the culprit of Black dropouts or late graduations, institutional factors such as the campus racial climate and lack of faculty diversity, receive less attention. However, Tinto (1993), and other authors such as Palmer and Gasman (2008), and Strayhorn (2010), affirm the positive impact that mentoring, and faculty interaction (especially Black faculty members) has on student's success.

This inference was acknowledged in the findings from Reid's (2013) study on persistence and social integration of 201 African American male students (sophomore to senior students) from five universities. In-spite of the literature stressing that individuals must adjust their perspectives in order to be successful, studies show that students (Black students in particular) who foster relationships with faculty members receive encouragement and are more apt to succeed. These students are most likely to engage in on-campus activities which boosts the students' *on* and *off* campus network (Baker, 2008; Harper 2006).

As stated earlier, the 2015 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reported that two-thirds of African American students never graduate from college. However, a 2020 NCES report shows that in 2019, the enrollment rate in higher education institution was 41 percent for White students ages 18-24, while the enrollment for Black students within that same age bracket was 37 percent. In investigating how African Americans use student organizations to express their Blackness, Harper and Quaye (2007) emphasized William Cross's 1971 and 1975 theoretical model of "psychological nigrescence", which explains the developmental levels associated with

Black racial identity. Various studies including, Evans, Forney and Guido-Digento (1998), Brown (1994), Turner (2001), and Harper (2004), where cited by Harper and Quaye (2007) as collaborating their conclusion that (1) identity conflict is the main culprit for the increased dropout rate of Black students, (2) there was a within-group sub population amongst the African American undergraduate student population. Harper and Quaye (2007) cautioned that the existence of these sub-groups within the Blacks community warrants for one to refrain from the tendency of treating African Americans as a monolithic group.

Harper & Quaye (2007) also found that to avoid being accused of "acting white" by their peers, many Black students do not join contemporary organizations on campus. However, the handful of proactive Black student members of these contemporary organizations revealed that by joining the contemporary organizations they were able to contribute the Black student perspective. For instant, membership in the student government provides them the opportunity to contribute the Black students' perspective during discussions of on-campus issues. In so doing, they serve as a go-between for the Black student population. These students willingly accept being deemed or categorized as "acting White" by their fellow Black students, as long as the opportunity to associate with their White peers enables them to better serve the greater community of the Black student body (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 137).

From an investigation of racial/ethnic minority students' experiences in navigating cultures of their PWI campus, Museus (2008) acknowledged that in comparison to 67 percent of Whites who graduate from a four-year college in six years, only 42 percent of their African American counterparts do the same. This is because the

cultures of higher educational institutions include the institutions' values, history, and content delivery (usually geared more towards the dominant racial group). The author contends that these factors in turn affect Black students in PWIs as well as those institutions' graduation results. Museus (2008) also found that ethnic student organizations play critical roles in Black students' adjustment to PWI's and their social involvement. Therefore, he admonished that wherever White dominant cultures can accommodate ethnic cultures, they should strive do so. The author's findings show that the ethnic sub-cultural groups help students in their cultural adjustment by posing as sources of cultural familiarity. The groups also, assist with cultural expression and advocacy, by acting as avenues to advocate racial and ethnic community's recognition (Museus, 2008).

Irving and Hudley conducted a study in 2008 on how African American male students' cultural mistrust and attitude impact achievement and motivation. The authors defined cultural mistrust as "the tendency for African Americans to distrust institutional, personal, or social contexts that are controlled by Whites" (2008, p. 679). Regarding their research, Irving and Hudley (2008) stated that: "This study found that as students' mistrust increased, their oppositional cultural attitudes increased…. students who had high responses to this measure may have some reservations concerning the willingness of a White-controlled system to reward African Americans" (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p. 690). The authors found that similar inferences on the negative impact of cultural mistrust on achievement and motivation were made by scholars including Ainsworth, 2002; Hudley & Taylor, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Ogbu, 2003; and Miller & Garran, 2007, as cited in Irving & Hudley). Ogbu (2003) also posited that African American youths

who are raised in affluence, and/or multiethnic environment may not experience obvious opposition from the dominant culture, and therefore, might not develop oppositional attitude. These group of youths usually establish comfortable coping strategies for peaceful coexistence within their communities. Armed with this coping strategy, such groups of African American youth/students can better assimilate the campus climate, resulting in more positive campus experience, and academic success.

On the other hand, Irving and Hudley (2008) found that in-spite of Ogbu's findings above, some authors, including Ogbu (2003) himself, Osborne (1997) and Steele (1992), affirmed that many African Americans who are raised in affluence still identify with cultural mistrust. These individuals might develop stronger oppositional attitude towards the dominant White culture, while battling with identity crisis (Irving & Hudley, 2008). The authors also concluded from their study, that cultural mistrust and negative attitudes greatly impact academic success. This finding resonates with Harper and Quaye (2007) who cautioned that "functioning, educators should be cognizant of the varied backgrounds from which African American men come" (2007, p. 141). They also suggested for faculty members to avoid treating African American students as a monolithic group. This is also noted in a 2018 report by Julian Wyllie in Chronicle of Higher Education which indicates that Black students attending HBCUs have a better chance (between 6 percent and 16 percent) of graduating in six years than those attending PWIs. This is because the HBCUs' campus climates are not hostile to Black students compared to PWIs (Wyllie, 2018).

The next section discusses how it takes courage and challenging the Black societal norm, for Black students to succeed (www.chronocle.com). The next section

discusses how it takes courage and challenging the Black societal norm, for Black students to succeed.

Revitalizing Identity for Success Through Transformative Learning

This section discusses how African American students who embrace their Black identity, lay strategic foundations which enables them to be successful, despite many odds. According to Wilson (2006), a race is a group of people who experience and share a common tradition and belief system; therefore, racial identity is intertwined with culture as well as social relations. African Americans endured slavery and continue to experience on-going discrimination as second-class citizen with low intelligence capability. This stereotypical connotation has driven the race to develop oppositional identity as a survival mechanism (Ogbu, 2003).

The Blacks therefore retaliate by shunning all that the Whites depict, resorting to do the opposite. This has also led to corroborating the self-fulfilling prophecy which infers that they are not good enough while non-conformists are classified as “acting White” by their peers (Ogbu, 2004; Harper, 2007). However, studies on the “non-conforming or acting White” of Black students in PWIs found that most of these students endeavor to advance the African American student community (Harper & Quaye 2007; Simmons, 2013). The students choose to participate in non-ethnic student organizations, to revitalize their Black identity. They practice, and foster cross cultural interaction, which is crucial for success. In Simmons’ 2013 study on factors that increase the retention and success of African American males in higher education, he concurred with Strayhom’s (2008) statement that, "campus involvements and social networks provide the

social and cultural capital which are necessary to succeed on a predominantly White or historically Black campus" (Strayhom, 2008, p. 80)

An example of revitalization of identity is Harper and Quaye's (2007) earlier reference to the group of African American students who willingly ignore the notion of being classified as "acting white" by their peers (p. 131), because they are convinced that membership in contemporary organizations puts them in a better position to educate the mainstream organizations about the Black race. These students develop the voice and qualities for promoting the concerns of African American students on various platforms. They understand that true success requires the ability to interact with other cultures (Harper & Quaye 2007).

Furthermore, the participants confirmed that they appreciated the differences and strengths of various ethnic students while proudly embracing their Blackness as in Cross' (1995) Internalization stage (Harper & Quaye 2007). Consequently, having previously experienced social disadvantages, these Black male students who ignore the notion of being classified as "acting white" by their peers, strive to help improve the situations of other socially disadvantaged Black students, and thereby become social change agents. As a result, the students develop leadership skills that transcend the Black community, while achieving personal and academic success.

Finally, since in this current research the Black male student participants focused specifically on their undergraduate experience with the BCC in the PWI, it is crucial to acknowledge the African Americans' general/typical frame of reference (including prior to higher education enrollment). This literature review is very helpful, because the exploration was to understand what meaning, or impact the BCC has on the participants'

lives - whether previous or current students of the PWI. This study explored how the participants perceive the Black Cultural Center's impact on their coping skills in interacting with diverse populations including Whites, as well as the Center's impact on their quest for academic success. The exploration would help in understanding whether the Center's impact did or didn't play a role in how African American students positively adopt beneficial learning disposition.

Summary

From literature, we noted that the African Americans have continued to struggle with developing their racial identity within the American society, due to historical experience of marginalization. The Blacks (males especially) develop "cultural mistrust and oppressional cultural attitude" which negatively impact motivation and success. This attitude is further enabled because many institutional services are usually designed from the perspective of the institutions, without soliciting for or considering Black students' opinions. However, involvement in on-campus activities through social integration has been found to increase the academic success rate of Black male students in PWIs.

Chapter Three Methodology discusses the three theoretical frameworks that guide this study. These are: (a) Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross, 1971, 1991), (b) Psychosocial Theory --Seven Vectors of Identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), and (c) The Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Problem

Research concerning African American male students' performance in higher educational institutes indicates a critical issue that requires exploration for understanding and enlightenment. The issue is that, in-spite of the Black Cultural Centers' (BCCs') institutionalization as a supportive system for African American students on many predominantly White institutions (PWI) over the years, the benefits these centers provide are not always evident across the Black student body. There is great concern among university administration that the high dropout rate among the Black student populations (especially male students) has persisted. Therefore, it is essential to examine whether or not the African American male students in PWIs perceive the BCCs as being impactful in their pursuit of success; and, if so, in what way is it viewed as instrumental in achieving success? The 21st century reality is that academic and professional success for all students and especially for African American students requires increased interaction within the academic and global community. This interaction is inescapable considering the inundation of technology. Hence, it is a step in the right direction to explore BCC's role as a support system for African American students within PWI campuses.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assists them in negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures to enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspirating for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e., the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009)).

In determining participants' academic success, I paid attention to participants' self-reporting, and self-evaluating as to whether or not they have developed skills that enables them to successfully and gainfully navigate within the campus and various other cultures (skills such as self-confidence, ability to: interact academically with faculty and fellow students, perform internal and external networking, increase their community involvement etc.). Also, students self-reported on how important it is for them to capably step beyond their comfort zone into diverse communities (i.e., on-campus and beyond) while remaining proud of their enhanced Black self-identity and trusting their Blackness to guide them.

The following guiding research questions was explored in the study, beginning with the overarching question:

In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center?

The research sub-questions include the following:

1. How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?
2. How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?
3. How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

Rationale for Qualitative Research Study Method

The qualitative research approach was the most appropriate for this exploration because it involves taking into consideration how the participants experience and understand their environment (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This agreed with Merriam's (2009) explanation of qualitative research as a design which helps with "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). The design allows for rich data collection processes which include interviews and observations in the natural setting.

Emerging themes will then be grouped for categorization in the analysis of the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell and Poth (2017) opine that a research topic introduces the problem and area of interest, which is then addressed from a researcher's paradigmatic perspective (i.e., the viewpoint from which the research is processed). Therefore, to effectively answer the research questions, the social constructivist paradigm was deemed best, because the study was to capture participants' individual perspective of the phenomenon. Social constructivism does not argue the existence of an absolute truth. Ontologically, social constructivism contends that multiple realities exist, and realities are "co-constructed from researcher-participant collaboration" (Creswell, 2013, pp. 36 -37; Creswell & Poth, 2017). Also, the axiological assumption allowed for consideration of the researcher's subjectivity and values in the interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical frameworks are "empirical or quasi empirical theory of social and/or psychological process, at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena" (Anfara & Mertz 2006, p. xxvii; 2015). Therefore, the following three theories were applicable to my research topic: (1) Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross, 1971, 1991); (2) Psychosocial Theory on Seven Vectors of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993); and (3) Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997).

Cross's Black Racial Identity Development Theory. Black scholars of the 1970s developed theories that exemplified the resiliency and strength of the African

Americans, throughout their encounter of oppression. Amongst these scholars was Cross (1971). Cross (1971, 1991) discussed the Nigrescence model of Black Identity development, which has evolved in his work to the present five stages: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization- Commitment.

Cross (1971, 1991) described "Pre-encounter" as a stage where the individual tries to assimilate and be accepted by Whites. An individual might also tend to shy away from his or her Black heritage. The next phase is the "Encounter" which is prompted by an awakening experience to injustice, or some form of rejection associated with one's racial identity or membership. The "Encounter" phase exposes the individual to the reality of racism. This could be an instance when the African American individual feels excluded or ostracized by White colleagues or peers. The experience usually causes an individual to yearn to surround him or herself with evidence of a Black identity or heritage. The individual now is in "Immersion/Emersion stage" which stimulates a drive to explore his or her Black heritage and begin to affirm his or her Blackness.

In continuation, Cross (1971, 1991) clarified that "Internalization" is when the individual is comfortable enough to entertain building meaningful relationships or collaborations with some Whites who are respectful of the Black Heritage. The last stage of "Internalization-Commitment" is when an individual reaches out to become involved and demonstrate commitment on issues of concern to the Black community.

Evidently, Cross' (1991) final stage of "Internalization" is aptly demonstrated by Harper and Quaye's (2007) depiction of some Black males who do not mind being called names by their peers because, they have embraced their identity with confidence. These individuals have developed cross-cultural competence and can seize opportunities to

effect change by meaningfully associating with their White peers. In addition, Harper and Quaye (2007) found that these students as noted join the mainstream organizations and activities in order to advance both themselves, and the issues of the Black student community.

Chickering's Psychosocial (Seven Vectors of Identity Development) Theory. In describing identity development theory, Arthur Chickering conducted a research study from 1959 to 1969, while involved in the *Project on Student Development in a Small College,* which was published in *Education and Identity* in 1969. However, along with Reisser, Chickering revisited his earlier work in 1993. Together they determined that the construct of seven vectors could be thought of as stages. Chickering's identity development is not typical of a specific race; it is applicable to various racial backgrounds. The following are the seven vectors: developing competence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy towards Independence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the vectors/stages do not have to be followed sequentially. This means that individuals can advance from any stage, depending on their already acquired developmental skills level from which the next vector can be developed. However, all skill levels must be possessed, because they support each other for positive development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). To further explain this, Chickering and Reisser indicated that higher education students are required to develop or enhance their intellectual competence, physical skills, and interpersonal competence, in order to be successful. Also, students learn to use critical thinking in

analyzing issues. The ability to do this involves developing new frame of reference that necessitates using one's mind (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Individuals learn to control their feelings and emotional reactions by recognizing the triggers for their negative reactions, and they develop a new frame of reference. This self-control would require seeking positive and healthy outlets for emotional release (e.g., incorporating gym workouts rather than resorting to violence). Therefore, the process of managing emotions in college depends on one's coping skills level, and frames of reference (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The new frame of reference might help the individual in understanding and experiencing other groups from a different or new perspective.

Furthermore, Chickering and Reisser (1993) posit that transitioning from home, or from a reassuring environment into college, creates the need for interdependence. Students move from the need for constant external reassurance, such as from family, peers, gang-mates toward relying more on their personal judgment for support, when interacting with the student body on campus. Therefore, interaction with others leads to meaningful interpersonal relationships which begin to negate stereotyping others. Students can form their own personal opinions as issues present themselves, rather than agreeing with the norm (1993).

Chickering and Reisser also noted that individuals establish their individualized identities when they have mastered some of the vector skills, because they would appear to have reached a "comfort zone" to develop their relatable personality. This means coming to terms with who they are, or how they can be defined. Developing their personality leads students to realize their purpose. Students would reevaluate their

interest, aspire to pursue their goal, and then would develop an action plan to achieve that goal.

At this point, the student understands that some compromises must be made to graduate (e.g., study with others outside one's race etc.); this then leads to developing integrity. Integrity requires that one balances the maintenance of one's core values while being respectful of the other person's point of view (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This allows individuals to adapt to rules to suit various conditions, when necessary, instead of maintaining stereotypical rigidity.

Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory. Mezirow originated the Transformational Learning Theory in 1978 (Mezirow et al., 2009). Mezirow explained that per transformative learning, our individual experiences influence our frames of reference which consists of our thoughts, feelings, and habits (2009). He also posited that the principles of transformative learning are based on the reconstruction of the frames of reference, which could be in the form of "rules, criteria, codes, language, schemata, cultural cannons, ideology, standards, or paradigms" (2009, p. 22). Furthermore, Mezirow defined transformative learnings as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow et al, 2009, p. 22).

Mezirow (1997) inferred that our frame of reference allows us to understand our experiences in a particular way; therefore, we tend to reject that which does not fit into our frame of reference. According to Mezirow (1997), a frame of reference consists of two dimensions: habits of mind; and point of view. "Habits of mind" is a way of thinking, which could be based on cultural, economic status, or political influence. Mezirow

postulates that, this could cause some individuals to develop stereotypical or judgmental attitude towards specific issues or situations. "Point of view" on the other hand is someone's perspective on issues or situations. Therefore, while habits of mind are more assimilative, a point of view is easier to change (Mezirow, 1997).

Per Mezirow, we can learn to transform our point of view through critical reflection and a rationalized discourse of our assumptions. For instance, we may change our point of view when we move through different cultures or work with different groups in order to generate positive interaction. Persons who insist on keeping a comfortable frame of reference negates transformative learning. Transformative learning works on an already established frame of reference when individuals critically assess the new knowledge or conditions (Mezirow, 1997).

It should be noted that since Mezirow's definition in 1997, understandings of transformational learning theory has been further developed, expanded and diversified, while maintaining the crux of Mezirow's idea of changing one's individual frame of reference. A review of a more recent Transformational Learning Handbook by Taylor, Cranton and Associates (2012) presented over 40 contributing authors who interpreted transformational theory and who use this theory to frame their research. The commonality in their works was their consistency with Mezirow's idea that this theory leads individuals to go beyond their habits of mind and explore other point of views that might lead them to transforming their perspectives. Stephen Brookfield, one of the book's contributing chapter authors, referred to humanism and constructivism which he describes from the critical theory perspective as feeling freed, with the ability to define

self and combat injustice. He posits that trust, mutual understanding and companionship are essential for transformative learning (Brookfield, 2012).

Of the 40 contributing authors in the aforementioned handbook of Transformational Learning, John Dirkx (2012) seems to be outspoken with more controversial perspectives of transformational learning theory. In his 2006 literature review, Dirkx delved deeply into how emotion, feelings, and unconscious expressions are crucial in adult learning and how they interpret their reality. Consequently, he introduced the Jungian in-depth psychology perspective when contributing to the transformational theory handbook. Jungian psychology informs on "individuation" which is defined as "becoming a unified but also a unique personality, an undivided and integrated person" (p.17). This in-depth psychology banks on the rarely mentioned individual's "inner self" which is usually overlooked. Dirkx (2012) refers to the development of ego consciousness which helps in managing interpersonal conflicts and unconsciously controls information that can wait to be addressed through psychic energy.

Taylor and Cranton (2012) inferred that Transformational Learning theory is based on the constructivist paradigm. This means that awareness and interpretation of participants' experiences are crucial. However, it becomes a problem when assumptions are only based on Western perspectives, or on any dominant ideology which is seen as normal or natural. Therefore, since constructivism submits to no absolute truth, scholars can choose the interpretation of transformational learning which suits or explains their studies best.

However, for my research, I favored Kasworm and Bowles' (2012) perspective on Transformative Learning when they refer to guiding individuals to move from their

comfort zone into a new less comfortable environment; this allows them to see issues from a broader perspective by interacting with and understanding other cultures. Kasworm and Bowles (2012) not only view transformational learning from a formal teaching setting, but they also saw its applicability within informal settings. Interaction in an informal setting is crucial to African American students' survival and success on PWI campuses. Kasworm and Bowles suggest that individualized self-reflection away from their home-bound dominant peers could nurture change of point of view.

All three of these theoretical frameworks, including Black Racial Identity Theory (Cross, 1971, 1991), Psychosocial Theory (Checkering & Reisser, 1993), and Transformational Learning Theory (Kasworm & Bowles, 2012; Mezirow, 1997) assisted me in my exploration and research on the experience of African America male students in term of the meaning they give to BCCs, particularly as it relates to developing adaptive coping skills for ultimate success in a PWI. While the three theoretical frameworks show that being successful in the society requires learning to interact with people who are culturally different, the frameworks also emphasize the importance of understanding and maintaining one's cultural identity.

Rationale for Case Study Approach

I was convinced that of all qualitative research methods, the case study was most appropriate for my study. A "case study" approach is described as "An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

In addition, Merriam (2009) posits that case study's *particularistic* characteristic, necessitates the researcher to focus on a specific situation, event, or program; its *descriptive* characteristic would produce a rich, "thick" description of the study; while its *heuristic characteristic* helps to illuminate the reader's understanding of the issue under study (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Therefore, using a case study method illustrates the unique case of the Black Cultural Center in real life setting, as well as its position in the lives of African American students who use it.

There are three types of case study methods: (1) *Intrinsic case study:* where the researcher illustrates a unique case, and tries to describe it in detail; (2) *Instrumental case study*: where a specific issue, problem or concern needs to be understood, "and a case is selected to best understand the issue" (Creswell, 2013, p. 98); (3) *Collective/multiple case study:* where one issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate this issue.

Instrumental case study approach was utilized to provide an in-depth understanding of the specific situation, and insight on the issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For this research study, "the case" is the PWI, and the bounded system is the Black Cultural Center within the PWI. Participants will be current Black male students, and/or Black male alumni (within the last ten years) who were users of this specific PWI's on-campus Black Cultural Center. The participants will only focus on their experience with the BCC as an undergraduate user.

Research Methods and Procedures

The original case study procedures planned would have consisted of interviews, observations, and study of archival documents. However, the COVID-19 and its

pandemic restrictions called for revisiting the planned research procedure, and procedural changes were initiated.

Semi-structured interviews were used to capture each participant's personal experience of the Center. Participants' interviews revealed their lived experiences. Semi-structured interview was used as applicable for rich data collection because**,** its structure allows room for follow-up questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Since the purpose of this research was to explore what the Black Cultural Center means to student users (specifically from students' perspectives), semi structured interviews encouraged participants to express their view in a structured manner.

I conducted at least one scheduled interview with each of the student participants, with the first scheduled interview lasting about 60 minutes. Galletta (2013) suggests that, when developing interview questions, it is best to separate the interview questions into three categories. The first category of questions should be open-ended and is used to establish comfort and rapport with participant and introduce the research topic. The second category of questions is best used after rapport and trust have been established. These questions should aim at in-depth exploration of the participant's perspectives on the research topic. As each interview proceeded broke down the questions into leading and probing questions, in an effort to reveal what the Center means to the student participant. The final category of questions was designed to loop back to the participant's prior comments. This allowed for additional information that participant might have forgotten initially or help in clarifying the participant's future desire towards the topic (Galletta, 2013). The second scheduled interview (where necessary) would allow each participant to review his interview transcription to verify for correctness

and/or omission. This format provided information with which to explore the case and enable answering of the three guiding research questions for the study. It also provided the opportunity to ask subsequent questions that I might have.

When I began this research, I had plans to include observations, to interview participants more than once if possible, and to interview more participants than I ultimately was able to interview. The arrival of COVID-19 and the subsequent pandemic resulted in universities moving to entirely online, including the university at which I was conducting this research, making it difficult to carry out my research as I had originally planned.

Observations would have included observing students' participation in activities at the Center and related to the Center. This would have allowed the researcher to see the natural state of activities (such as interactions) at the Center. For current student participants, the researcher would have had the opportunity to observe the type of influence or nature of interactions that the cultural center's atmosphere has on the students' participation at the Center (atmosphere includes the physical arrangement of the Center and its décor). My "researcher observer" statuses would have included: (a) observer, (b) observer as participant, and (c) participant as observer, (Hays & Singh, 2012). These various statuses would have allowed me to see the state of activities, document interactions at the Center, and explore the case in its natural setting. During observation I would have used *field notes* to enable the documentation of observations, my reflections, as well as to capture instant thoughts for further elaboration (Hays & Singh, 2012). *Memoing* reflexively would have enabled me to keep my subjectivity in focus, while analytical memoing enable me to analyze the case more critically (Saldana,

2013). Also, the *Review of Archived Documents* was only limited to Midwest County University's publicly accessible online documents and information due to the COVID-19 restriction.

Meanwhile, in-spite of the restrictions data triangulation was still achieved by employing sources from student-participants, staff-participants, and institutional online information. These were adapted in verifying issues in order to provide additional strength to both the trustworthiness and credibility of my research data (Hays & Singh, 2012). My Critical Friends included my study group participants with whom I bounced ideas, my research Methodologist, and my research Chairperson. They challenged me and served as a second eye in my data analysis.

Site Profile

For the purposes of this research, I focused on Midwest County University (pseudonym) which is an urban public predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education in the Midwest. The institution was founded in the 1960s and currently, boasts of over 17,000 in student enrollment, more than 10 colleges and schools, and over 175 academic programs. In 2019 the institution was ranked among the top 500 best schools in the US by a top national journal. The student population is about 55 percent women, 45 percent men and 27 percent minorities, of which two-thirds are African Americans.

The institution's mission involves encouraging excellence, diversity, and hands-on learning through contemporary and accessible education in the arts, sciences, humanities, engineering, and law professions; and by conducting research, scholarship, and creative activities across these branches of knowledge.

MCU site campus climate. MCU's staff and faculty endeavor to serve and engage the public while preparing students to lead productive, responsible and satisfying lives in the community and globally. A 2010 survey on MCU students regarding the campus climate of Midwest County University showed that over 50 percent of participants responded positively that:

1. The administration is committed to understanding group differences.
2. Racial climate is improving.
3. Faculty should promote interaction of students of various backgrounds.

However, it should be noted that 69 percent of the student participants were White, and 20 percent were Black.

The above results seem consistent with a more recent and similar MCU survey in 2017. The survey response comprised of 141 faculty, 245 staff members and 2,379 students. The number of survey student-responders from various colleges were as follows: College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (21 percent), College of Business (16 percent), the College of Engineering (16 percent), the College of Education and Human Services (10 percent), the School of Nursing (five percent), the College of Urban Affairs (five percent), College of Law (two percent), the College of Graduate Studies (two percent), and the Honors College (one percent). The survey consisted of the following topic areas.

Satisfaction: Rate of possibility to recommend MCU. 89 percent of the combination of various student racial population survey-responders agreed that they

would recommend MCU to a friend or family member, while 11 percent would not. Also, 90 percent of all the White/Caucasian student-responders would recommend MCU, and 10 percent would not do so. While 86 percent of all the African American survey-responders would recommend MCU, 14 percent would not do so.

Overall racial/ethnic climate. 79 percent of the combination of various student racial population survey-responders agreed that the racial climate at MCU was friendly, while four percent disagreed. Also, 82 percent of all the White/Caucasian survey student-responders agreed that the racial climate at MCU was friendly, and two percent said it was hostile. Also, while 67 percent of all the African American survey-responders agreed that the racial climate at MCU was friendly, six percent said it was hostile.

Social interaction between races/ethnicities. 56 percent of the combination of various student racial population survey-responders agreed that it was easy to become friends with members of other races on this campus, while six percent said it was difficult. Also, 85 percent of all the White/Caucasian survey student-responders agreed that they were comfortable becoming friends with members of other races, while five percent disagreed. While 84 percent of all the African American survey-responders agreed that they were comfortable becoming friends with members of other races, six percent said they were uncomfortable.

Faculty: Being approachable and sensitive *(inside and outside of classroom).* 76 percent of the combination of various student racial population survey-responders agreed that all or most of the faculty whose courses they had taken were approachable outside the classroom, and eight percent *disagreed* that faculty were approachable outside the classroom. Also, 70 percent of all the White/Caucasian survey student-responders

agreed that faculty were approachable outside the classroom, and 12 percent disagreed. While 57 percent of all the African American survey-responders agreed that faculty were approachable outside the classroom, 22 percent disagreed.

Commitment, policies, and action to improve campus climate. 71 percent of the combination of various student racial population survey-responders agreed that the top administration in their department was genuinely committed to promoting respect for and understanding of group differences at MCU, while five percent disagreed. 77 percent White/Caucasian students were most positive on this question, and five percent disagreed. Also, 56 percent of all the African American survey-responders agreed, while 19 percent disagreed.

Furthermore, Midwest County University is one of the few universities in the Midwest which has an African American Cultural Center. The African American Cultural Center emanated from the institution's Black Studies Program (also founded in the 1960s) which serves as an umbrella with six components or programs including Academics (i.e., the majors and minors). The other five components include the African American Cultural Center, and the Center is a major part of the Black Studies Program. Therefore, although this multi purposed Center seems to stand alone, it is in fact an integral part of the Black Studies Program and is housed within the institution's Black Studies Program facility. The Center's mission statement is based on providing the university and its local communities with avenues and activities to increase their knowledge of the Black's ancestry and African culture. To this effect, the Center houses collections of African art, works of African American artists, films, video recordings etc., which enables more realistic scholastic study of the history, culture, and developments of

African American's ancestry. Furthermore, the Center is also a place where students can relax, study, socialize, network (*pseudonym)* www.mcu.edu).

Research Sample Selection

As noted earlier, case studies sample participants are comprised of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being explored within a bounded system, in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). Therefore, in consistency with the above description, my *case's* bounded system is the Black Cultural Center (BCC) within Midwest County University. The purposeful sampling consisted of ***(a)*** a combination of five (reduced from 12 due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) select African American male current students and alumni of Midwest County University, and ***(b)*** three (reduced from five due to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic restrictions) Black Studies Program officials (i.e., faculty and BCC staff from current or former positions). The program officials' perspectives held the inside and background information about the Center. Inclusion of the BCC staff added context to both my observation and students' interviews, while the students' interviews revealed their lived experience. The criteria for selection of participants were:

1. Self-identified male African American
2. Current student of junior, senior, graduate level standing, or non-attending alumni.
3. Current or previous user of the institution's Black Cultural Center, with consistent participation in Center's programs during undergraduate years (as verified via recommendation from the Center's director and staff, as

well as self-report from participants as to how often they used the Center (at least once a week)).

Purposeful sampling selection yielded participants whose experience made them good candidates for the study. Participants were selected from a pre-identified criteria-specific list of candidates which was shared by the BCC staff, as well as from snowball referrals by students in the PWI. A letter of invitation to participate in the study was sent to potential candidates. The letter detailed the expectation, format, and condition for participation. This included an explanation of confidentiality and the option to opt-out of the study at any point, without penalty. Selected candidates were notified and were scheduled for interviews.

Data Analysis

Most qualitative research data analysis begins with coding. Per Saldaña (2013), coding is "primarily an interpretative act…Coding is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis" (pp. 4-5). Also, data are not very precise, which means that one datum might fall into more than one code, depending on its relationship within specific codes. Furthermore, the researcher's personal perception of the data, affects the research coding filters or interpretation. Therefore, the researcher's subjectivity is reflected in how the codes are determined in the coding cyclical process (Saldaña, 2013).

Of the series of coding methods, I used the "Descriptive Coding" method, also known as "topic coding" (Saldaña, 2013). This coding method uses words or short phrases for codes. Saldaña describes several cycles of coding in qualitative research. The

first cycle coding begins with pre-coding by highlighting, bolding, underlining, or italicizing. The ability of multiple

affiliations of a single pieces of data results in the tendency for the number of first cycle codes to increase quickly (Saldaña, 2013). Field notes, memos and interview transcription were coded in the first cycle coding. The *second cycle* re-coding involved (1) listing the number of times a code repeated in the first cycle coding from the memos, field notes, and interview transcription; and (2) reviewing the first cycle codes to find and merge groups of codes that could be related, to reduce redundancy and find a code that captures what is evident in the data. This resulted in one common code being generated to replace each merged group of codes. The next step was to list the new set of codes into emergent categories. Following that, the *third cycle* coding involved developing thematic concepts from the categories through the process of synthesis (Saldaña, 2013).

Confidentiality, Ethical Concerns and Privacy Protection

I obtained the clearance to conduct the research from Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). The IRB clearance requires that research participants are provided the most protection possible. Therefore, participants were made aware of the purpose of my research and were given an option to participate or not. A signed letter of agreement was obtained from the appropriate authority prior to observing activities at the site, contacting prospective participants, conducting interviews, and reviewing of archival documents. Pseudonyms were used to mask the site**,** participants' names (Galletta, 2013, p. 46, 177). Member checks allowed participants to check if my transcription correctly captured and conveyed the essence of our interview sessions.

Researcher's Positionality

As an employee of the predominantly White higher educational institution, as well as a community member of its predominantly Black city, my prior familiarity with the student population, and the Black Cultural Center was established from the onset. This helped to clarify my researcher role as both an *insider* and *outsider*. I balanced the hyphenation of being an employee (insider), as well as a researcher (outsider). For instance, gaining access to the site easily, might have been a perk that came with my status as an employee (insider) of the institution. However, from my recent experience, the ability to efficiently handle and balance this subjectivity was an ongoing issue. Continuous reflexivity was invaluable to me as a researcher. Reflexivity was helpful in handling my subjectivity and awareness of the role of my positionality in the research project.

Subjectivity. In addition to being an employee of one of the institutions as well as a community member, I am neither White nor African American, but a Nigerian-American. Experience from my previous study revealed the implication of my subjectivity, including pre-conceived notions toward both the Whites and African Americans. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to acknowledge and control these biases. I reflected on them continuously, so that I might see and conduct this study through fresh eyes (Moustakas, 1994).

The awareness and recognition of my positionality as an employee of the institution was crucial in creating boundaries of interaction (Hays & Singh, 2012). As a researcher, I recognized my power as an insider, and made sure to state and establish my functioning capacity as researcher when relating to participants in the research process. I

continued to recognize my preconceived notions of both the Whites and the African Americans. In addition, I earned the trust of participants and developed rapport by engaging participants as co-constructors of the meaning that emerged from the data. This allowed for unrestrictive and rich data collection process (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Method of Ensuring Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness is critical for every research study therefore, I implemented the three major categories of measuring trustworthiness which are as follows:

Integrity of data. Since maintaining integrity of data is the crux of a research study, Hays and Singh (2012) provided some guidance in ways to ensure the integrity of data including: (1) Use of appropriate number of participants. This usually depended on the research questions, there should be enough participants in my sample to adequately provide responses to what the study proposes to explore. (2) Triangulation of data enabled me to use various data sources in verifying the issue. This provided additional strength to both the trustworthiness and credibility of my research data. (3) Critical friends served as second pair of eyes, or as "devil's advocate to ensure that statements or entries could be challenged where necessary" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 211). (4) Member checks with participants ensured that they are involved in the research. It allowed the opportunity to ask for participants' feedback during transcription as well as when the report is written. This "check" will ensure that the participants' opinions are accurately represented. (5) Audit trail of the collected data served as an organized "go to" resource for verification, or fact-checking of information during documentation. It also helped in maintaining the chronology of the research development (Hays & Singh, 2012). (6)

Finally, in Creswell (2013); and Creswell and Poth (2017) the authors discussed the role of a peer auditor, or peer debriefer- someone who will be familiar with the researcher and the research project. The authors contended that this person could be one of the researcher's dissertation committee members, and would serve as an internal validator, in order to "enhance the accuracy of the account… so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher" (Creswell, 2013, p. 196). For this study, my research methodologist will engage me in peer debriefing.

Balance between reflexivity and subjectivity. As mentioned earlier, I (the researcher) am an employee of the PWI where the research took place, as well as a community member who is associated with this Center. These affiliations gave me a unique vantage point of view of the Center. For example, I already understand the institution's campus culture due to my many years of employment. Furthermore, my unique perspective as one of the fourth migration Africans (i.e., Africans who began arriving in the United States from the late 20th Century to the present) kindles my greater appreciation for the literature which exposes the "whys" and "hows" of the American society. My process of assimilation into the American society included the study of structural and social forces, racism, classism, and barriers to education for the African American population. These factors and lack of resources have resulted in inequality and lack of mobility for the Blacks (Berlin, 2010). As the researcher, I see issues from a different or new beneficial perspective and provide recommendations accordingly.

However, experience from a previous study revealed the implication of my subjectivity and the need to fully engage in reflexivity during this research project. Therefore, the constant awareness and recognition of my positionality, and subjectivity,

along with employing reflexivity, would be crucial in creating effective boundaries of interaction (Hays & Singh, 2012). I stated and established my functioning capacity as a researcher, when relating to participants during the study. As stated earlier in this chapter, I earned the participants' trusts and developed rapport by engaging each participant as co-constructors in the research (2012).

The need of reflexivity is confirmed by Galletta (2013), in her case study research study which was centered on the city of Shaker Heights, Ohio- where she was also a resident. From inception, the author set the tone with her interest in Shaker Heights' desegregated school district. She used extensive literature review of the topic as well as her own personal view or experience in the topic area. While her investigator's experience in the topic triggered some bias, it also provided valuable insight to the study and prompted her reflexivity. For instance, with regards to her interview with a participant (Dan), Galletta notably reflected:

> Nevertheless, the occurrences of my affirmation and their timing were striking and deserved critical reflection…. As I transcribed the interview, a question jumped out at me. Why did I not let Dan finish his statement? What was I thinking? ... Strangely, I am reluctant to let Dan "go there" and yet at the same time, my expression of assent suggests that I am already there with Dan. I am struck by how effectively I derailed the conversation with Dan when it got too close to narrating racial or religious exclusion" (Galletta, 2013, p. 107).

Galletta acknowledged in her reflexive memo that her subjectivity and bias might have caused her to influence her participant's response to her question. However, she used

the opportunity to engage in further interactions with Dan which added "further texture" and thick description to the study (Galletta, 2013, p. 108).

Thick description of the content. To establish social validity, in-depth literature review was conducted for awareness of findings from current studies. These findings helped to establish rationale for the research. Context was considered in data gathering along with thick description of data (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Reliability and Validity

Guba and Lincoln (1989) inferred that critics judge a good qualitative research from meeting the following four criteria for: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility. Credibility was achieved by describing the case as participants' experience, bearing in mind that each experience was from the individual's perspective. This validated the appropriateness of applying the social constructivist ontological philosophy of existence of multiple realities.

Transferability. Evidence should be clearly described in light of the context and setting, to allow for transferability so that readers might consider if the study findings have application to their context. Triangulation of data from multiple sources such as interviews, and archived documentation was be applied. Also, the data analysis process was clearly portrayed.

Dependability. Researcher's subjectivity must be monitored reflexively, and reflexive memo should help with accurately documenting the procedures and the analysis. One in-depth interview was conducted with each participant and In Vivo quotes from participants was used for emphasis. Confirming data sources through the audit trail

provided with accurate documentation will help to ensure correct interpretation (Guba & Lincoln 1989).

Confirmability. Member-check with participants was used following interview transcriptions, for verification. Critical friends, which included my doctoral program classmates, were engaged for peer review and cross checking of process; while In Vivo quotes, as well as reflexive and analytical memoing were also used for confirmability. Documents will be examined to note any contradictions (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Therefore, from the preceding section, it is evident that establishing the trustworthiness of a research study cannot be achieved without ensuring reliability and validity of the study.

Summary

In summary, the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students on a PWI campus as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assist them in negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures, in order for the students to achieve academic success as described earlier. Since the qualitative research approach involved considering how the participants experience and understand their environment (Creswell & Poth, 2017), I deemed it the most appropriate method for this exploration. In addition, Creswell's inclination agrees with Merriam's (2009) earlier explanation of qualitative research as a design which helps with "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Therefore, as stated earlier, my participants became co-constructors in the research. The case study was most appropriate for my study. A "case study" approach is described as "An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when

the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Since the on-campus Black or African American Cultural Center is supposed to be a support system for Black students, this study explored if student participants perceived that the Center encouraged and guided them through stepping beyond their comfort zone to embrace the diverse and global community. Since limited study has been conducted in the area of students' perceptions and the extent of benefit, if any, of BBCs on African American male students, the findings from this study may lead to future enhancement of the BCCs contributions to the success rate of African American male students in PWI, as well as contribute to current research literature and higher education policy.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings of this study which explored the perspectives of undergraduate male students who participated in the on-campus Black Cultural or African American Cultural Center in one Midwestern university. Data were collected through participant interviews and analyzed using various coding methods. Descriptions of participants' background prior to enrolling in Midwest County University (pseudonym) are also provided along with the background of the university itself.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepared and assisted these males in negotiating the barriers posed by the predominantly white institution's (PWI) campus-cultures and enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspiring for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e. the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during students' college experience (Cuseo, 2009).

In determining participants' academic success, I paid attention to participants' self-reporting and self-evaluating as to whether or not they have developed skills that enable them to navigate within the campus community and various other cultures successfully and gainfully. These skills include self-confidence, and the ability to interact academically with faculty and fellow students, perform internal and external networking, increase their community involvement etc. I was also interested in the extent to which students spoke about their ability and confidence to capably step beyond their comfort zone into diverse communities (i.e. on-campus and beyond), while remaining proud of their enhanced Black self-identity and trusting their Blackness to guide them.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was:

In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?
2. How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?

3. How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

Site Profile Recap

For the purposes of this research, along with the site's elaborate description in chapter three, I focused on Midwest County University (MCU) which is a pseudonym for an urban public predominantly White institution (PWI) of higher education in Midwestern U.S. Furthermore, MCU is one of the few universities in the Midwest which has an African American Cultural Center. The African American Cultural Center was structured in 1970 as part of the institution's Africana Studies Program. The Africana Studies Program serves as an umbrella with six components including academics (i.e., the majors and minors), and the African American Cultural Center. Therefore, although this multi purposed Center seems to stand alone, it is in fact an integral part of the Africana Studies Program and is housed within the institution's Africana Studies Program facility. The Center's mission statement is:

> To foster academic excellence and success for all students at Midwest County University and to provide the {City} metropolitan area with opportunities to acquire knowledge and appreciation of the history and culture of people of African descent.

This is based on providing the university and its local communities with avenues and activities to increase their knowledge of the Black ancestry and African culture. To this effect, the Center houses collections of African art, works of African American artists, films, video recordings etc., which enables more realistic scholastic study of the

history, culture, and developments of the African American's ancestry. Furthermore, the Center is a place where students can relax, study, socialize, network, to name a few social and academic activities.

Participants' Profile

As stated earlier, the number of participants for this study was reduced from 12 to eight due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This included five students/alumni and three staff members of the Center. Email invitations were sent to the Center's potential student- participant candidates from a pre-identified list of names by the African American Cultural Center staff members (see Appendix C). Confidential invitation emails were also sent to the Center staff to solicit their participation. All selected participants read and signed the Participant's Consent Form (see Appendix D), which also explained the research process and the scope of their involvement. For data collection, Zoom interviews of at least one hour long were conducted and recorded with the consent of each participant for data collection**.** The five student-participants were given the following pseudonyms: Drake, Larry, Max, Kalos and Ross. Two of the participants were current students at MCU at the time of interview, while three were alumni. Among, the study participants were three individuals who were staff or faculty associated with the Center: these individuals are given the pseudonyms Mr. Parker, Dr. Walker and Dr. Baker.

Student Participants

Max. Max was a junior in his early twenties. Both his parents earned college degrees and lived in a suburb to the city in which MCU is located. He attended a predominantly White high school where he played football, basketball and ran track. He

said that though he loved going to church, he had not attended for a long while due to the pandemic. He elected to attend MCU because his alumnus mother an alumnus to MCU told him nice things about the institution, and some of his high school friends (both White and Black) were MCU students. In addition, Max lived in an apartment close to campus and loved MCU's location which was situated close to various amenities. With regards to his studies during the COVID-19 pandemic he said, "When I was on campus, I struggled with getting to class on time, but now that it's been online classes, I can really just do what I need to do and get it done."

Larry. Larry was in his forties and was a nontraditional senior at MCU who considered himself a career student before coming to the university. This is because he had been in school for a long time. He had dropped out of high school in the 11th grade due to family issues and had been moving from one school to another as well as switching majors. For instance, he was once pursuing Nursing at a local college but had to drop out due to health issues. However, upon his return he was asked to restart the program afresh, so he switched to the EMT program and graduated from that program in 2015. He also participated in Job Corp and enlisted in the military. Reflecting on his impoverished upbringing he said:

> I never had a father growing up, he died when I was nine years old, and my mother was a single parent on welfare. So, I never had any type of people around me that inspired me…I had to take care of my brothers and my mom, so I got to do what I got to do. So, I didn't have time for education at that time.

In addition, he became a young father at 18.

Following Larry's return from the military, he finally decided to earn his bachelor's degree from MCU. He continued to work fulltime while pursuing his educational goal in a science major with a minor in Africana Studies. Regarding his studies during the COVID-19 pandemic, he said "All my classes, every class I take is online. It drives me crazy. I tell you; I do not like it because I liked the involvement... Face-to-face interaction and things I became a part of was for a reason, they helped me cause I'll be pursuing my PhD."

Ross. Ross was born and grew up in a country in West Africa and classified himself as member of the fourth great migration (i.e., Africans who migrated to the U.S. of their freewill during the 20th century). He was 16 years old when he and his siblings came to the U.S. to live with their mother. He had finished high school in West Africa at 16 under a different school system than the U.S. system However, when his mother suggested for him to repeat high school in the U.S. to get acclimated with the American culture, he said that he did not argue, then with a smile he said "So that's what happened. That's what we did. That's what I did." When asked if that idea proved beneficial to him, he declared:

> I got the chance to make some new friends before going to college. So that was beneficial too. And to learn a little bit about the American culture since I'm from a different culture. And being a high school student, you know, is slightly different from what college students, experience. So again, I had the chance to experience both. That was a benefit.

Ross graduated from MCU less than ten years ago with a Bachelor of Science degree related to the health industry and has since moved out of state.

Kalos. Kalos graduated from a local religious high school and immediately attended an out-of-town state university for one year, majoring in mass communication. After his first year at the university, he dropped out of school for one year to work. He then resumed his studies at MCU from which he graduated several years before this interview. He confirmed that he is the second person in his family to graduate from college while his grandmother was the first. Kalos added that he never really thought specifically about whether or not he was going to college because "in my senior year in high school, everybody else in my class was going. So, I just thought it was the thing to do."

Drake. When explaining his upbringing, Drake stressed that growing up, he "lived in one of the worst neighborhoods. It was like gunfire, every night, it was rough. And I just wanted something different." He acknowledged that due to the high rate of negative activities in his neighborhood, his mother encouraged him early in life to learn a trade skill so he can have "something to fall back on" if or when necessary. Surprisingly, he described his high school as the fictitious East High School in the movie *Lean on Me* (1989), where the school principal (portrayed by actor Morgan Freeman) refused to give up on his students and drove them to succeed (https://www.imdb.com/video/vi1358807321/?ref_=tt_vi_i_1). Drake focused on art in high school, and added "There was a teacher, and she was amazing. Even though everything was crazy around, she would always drop these *jewels of knowledge* and students never missed her class." He developed interest in photography and continued to a local two-year college for graphic and visual art design. Recalling his situation at that that time seemed to dredge up a negative memory because he sighed when he said.

> I was actually homeless kind of for a minute there…I had a job and my boss didn't care about my school life. It was like, he basically gave me an ultimatum, that it's either my school or his job. And at the moment I didn't really have a place to stay so I chose the job at first, but I realized that I wasn't even getting paid enough to a get a place to stay. So, I quit the job and just went on with the school full throttle. I would sleep at people's houses, and I made my way through.

Following his graduation from the local two-year college in about four years instead of two, Drake applied and was accepted at MCU. He graduated several years later with a degree in graphic design.

African American Cultural Center Staff Participants

I will begin this section by introducing a non-participant of this research, **Dr. Ward.** He was the Center's Previous Director. Please note that although Dr. Ward tragically died and was not a staff participant in this research, it is very necessary to acknowledge him due to his crucial impact on the Center, the local and MCU communities, and the Africana Studies Program's faculty, staff, and students. He was the originator of the Africana Studies major and minor in MCU and he was consistently mentioned by most of the research participants.

Three African American Cultural Center staff-member participants were interviewed. These consisted of the Center's: Coordinator (Mr. Parker), former Interim-Director (Dr. Walker), and current Director (Dr. Baker). To maintain confidentiality, they will be referred to by their assigned pseudonyms.

Coordinator *(Mr. Parker).* Mr. Parker had been with the Center for 25 years and has served under at least three Center Directors. He is also one of the Africana Studies Program course instructors. Mr. Parker is the longest serving Center's member of staff. As an alum of Midwest County University (having acquired his graduate degree from MCU), he knew the Center's history. He understood both the student and administrative point of views which is very helpful in working with both sides. He readily and with excitement can reflect on the Center's growth as well as its challenges under various directors.

When discussing one of the vital purposes of the Center Mr. Parker said, "The Center provides a place for enculturation, to help deal with cognitive dissonance; to acknowledge that African Americans and African diaspora are respectful and have a lot to give. This challenges the reasoning that Blacks cannot survive on their own and are second class citizen." As the Center's coordinator, Mr. Parker developed several programs to engage students and the relevant communities. These included the Kuumba Art Festival to celebrate cultural arts of dance, poetry, and vocal art. The festival grew to connect with MCU's Media and Film department for post-production, as well as the Theater and Dance department. Umoja Round Tables is another remarkable program; it was student-led and engaged local professionals from various career fields in discussions. Mr. Parker could be seen as the connecting link through the Center's transitions to present operation.

Interim Director *(Dr. Walker).* Dr. Walker was an existing faculty member at Midwest County University as well as for the institution's Africana Studies Program. However, she was tapped to also function as the Interim Director when the Center

suddenly and tragically lost its previous director, Dr. Ward, of 15 years. Dr. Walker served as the Center's interim director for one year. Dr Walker confessed that her first observation as the Center's interim director was recognizing how devastated the students were at the loss of Dr. Ward. She noted that her focus was on healing of the students. "It was a challenging year. The loss of Dr. Ward was unfillable. Students felt that they lost a family member…I could not fill his shoes…nobody can. Dr. Ward was unique." She also said that as she began to build relationship with both the old and new students, she noticed that the students became more passionate to reach their goals and beyond. She concluded with "People took care of each other." Dr. Ward is still one of the Center's faculty members.

Current Center Director *(Dr. Baker).* Dr. Baker was hired from another institution external to Midwest County University and has been the Director of Africana Studies Program, as well as the African American Cultural Center's Director, for nearly four years. He is also a faulty member for the Africana Studies Programs. Within his time as Director, Dr. Baker confirmed that several African American and African students have informed him that they do not feel included at MCU except within the Center. He added that he has created a platform where students can air their grievances. Dr. Baker also said that he has brought the students' complaints to the attention of MCU's president, so he now meets with the president regularly to discuss this and similar issues.

Themes

Although non-Blacks may mistakenly assume that the Black population is homogeneous, all my participants had diverse life experiences. However, they had one major thing in common which is that they all participated at MCU's on-campus African

American or Black Cultural Center (BCC) on a fairly regular basis. Therefore, I began each student-participants' interviews by exploring the reason for their constant visits to the Center (see Appendix E).

The in-depth analysis of the five Center- participant's transcripts culminated in five themes (each of which has sub-themes). These themes and sub-themes depicted what greatly influenced participants' opinions of what the Black Cultural Center *(that they fondly called Black Studies Center)* means to them. Table 3 lists the themes as follows:

Table 3

Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Like Home & Family	
Identity Development	Community and Culture
	Pulled into a Mindset
Academic and Social Resources	Academic Success
	Other Campus Activities
	Giving Back
	Marginalization on PWI Campus
Motivation/Inspiration	Mentoring
	Revitalization and Transformation
	Community Advancement and Activism
Racial Interactions	

In explaining their attraction or draw to the Center, the theme "Like home and family" emanated from participants' similar discussions and affirmations about the Center.

Like home & family. From the research participant's perceptions, "Home" is where one feels relaxed and let one's guard down. It is a place where one can socialize or hangout. Participants' emphasis on the word home also conjures permanency, residency, refuge, rooted, fortress, relaxation, unwinding, calming, enjoyment, being-oneself etc. According to Larry, one can throw caution to the wind in the unrestricting space of home and be able to breathe freely. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary also affirms that a home is supposed to be a dwelling place for one's family, and it is intended to keep unwanted company out (www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/home). In their description of the Center, all the participants agreed that MCU's Center made them feel some of the emotions noted above.

Kalos asserted his feelings for the Center by comparing Midwest County University with a hospital emergency room or a cafeteria where one must wait in line for their turn, whereas "in Black Studies Center you can take your coat off and your book bag, throw them over there; then go in the cultural center room where the tables are, and lounge there. It was pretty much like a, like a house, a home." He also confirmed that he loved the people at the Center where he went to spend time and talk about life issues. With a sigh he said, "That was the best part of me and what I missed the most."

Ross concurred that the Center was like a home within MCU. He also attributed the Center with assisting him to adjust to college life more quickly. He was able to maneuver the campus and make new friends more easily than he thought he could, especially as he

was a West African American. He explained that this is because “Once you walk through those Black Cultural Center doors you automatically make a lot of friends or acquaintances instantly, because you got a lot in common. It was like home.”

Larry, who was then a graduate student at MCU also recalled that the Center has been giving him much more comfort since he became involved in it. Initially, he did not have a sense of home at MCU. He added that before he was introduced to the Black Studies Center, he would not stay on campus all day. He would immediately commute to his home as soon as his class was over, or he would go to work. However, his attitude changed following his introduction to the Center’s facility because:

> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I stayed at the Center until five or six o'clock in the evening doing my study in there, or we’ll sit up there talking and socializing with the other students. I didn't ever want to leave. I felt so comfortable, and this is a family. Yeah. Just the ability to come in and you can relax, you can eat, do homework and just have good conversation with a lot of different people. The previous director (Dr. Ward) was very cool and nice to everybody. We had a lot of different events that people were interested in attending.

Max, who was a junior at the university said that the Center helped him feel like he belonged on campus, and added that, “it makes me feel emotional. I get really motivated and excited.” He expressed an appreciation for the Center’s access to some rare information on the trailblazing African Americans freedom fighters who advocated and fought for what Blacks can do today.

Furthermore, the three staff-research participants concurred with the student participants. Dr. Baker stated that "Students hang-out, network, and relax at the Center." Mr. Parker went even further revealing that "The Center is like a second home to the students. Some students are homeless or may experience social isolation due to gang infestation in their local neighborhood." Dr. Walker (the former interim director) added that "The Center is a safe place where students felt okay." She also inferred that this was the students' feelings when Dr. Wade, the Center's previous deceased director was here. She confirmed that "Dr. Wade was always interactive with the students. Students told me that he would always come out to the open area to visibly interact with the students…Therefore, when I came, I knew it was important to be visible." The Center had comfortable couches and study area with computers, making it a self-contained facility for both students and staff.

Identity development. The theme "Identity Development" sums up the participants' responses to the influence of the Black Cultural Center. Within the first sub-theme, Community and Culture, participants reflected on how their community, culture, and the Black Cultural Center influenced their identity development. In addition, the second sub-theme, Pulled into a Mindset, relates to the changes to participants' attitudes and behaviors as a result of the Center's influence their identity development or enhancement.

Community and culture. The Community and Culture section describes the evolution in participants' identity development following their interactions with the Black Cultural Center. I begin this discussion with factors that molded participant's early identity development. Larry, whose father had died when he was very young and was

raised by his mother revealed that while growing up, he never had anyone around him who inspired him. He only looked up to Black iconic figures in Black history for inspiration. He asserted:

> The things I've always seen growing up in regard to the struggles of Blacks, has always inspired me. I used to always tell myself that if they can do it through the circumstances that they had to transpire in, then I can be that same type of person. So that inspired me alone. As far as academic life and prior to attending college and the Center, I had dropped out of high school in 11th grade for family issues. I never had anybody in my family that inspired me in regard to education, or to pursue life in academical aspect, because I come from a very impoverished environment.

Ross, who had classified himself as member of the fourth great migration (i.e. Africans who migrated to the U.S. of their freewill in the 20th century), narrated the centrality of his West African identity in his views on the Center's contribution to his identity development. He reminisced:

> I was born in West Africa, and I moved to the U S when I was 16. Me and my siblings, we lived with my mom, in [City]. Then I went to high school here in [City] for about two years…. Me personally, being marginal and being African, I already had a very, very strong identity. So, I was just bringing what I had as an African, to the African American Cultural Center to learn the difference.

Drake reflected on his very rough neighborhood in [City area] which was always full of gunfire. He said that before coming to MCU, he knew that he had wanted something different from his neighborhood activities. Drake expressed his gratitude to his mother who taught him and his siblings to always have something to fall back on. His mother was preparing them because according to Drake they "lived in one of the worst neighborhoods in [City] and it was full of gunfire." She wanted her children to be positively self-sustaining in spite of their neighborhood's norm. Drake added that "she used to give us projects before we ever saw our classrooms. We had to know how to do something because she knew it was rough out here." Therefore, he knew while growing up that he did not just want his neighborhood to define his life.

In his quest to accomplish that goal, Drake strongly attributed the Center and its programs for contributing to his Black identity development and enhancement. He recapped how one day he was sitting in a lounge area reminiscing on the recent death of his grandmother which was shortly followed by the death of his grandfather. Deep in his thoughts and consumed by his grief, he heard noises coming from a room in Black Studies and this came from the Center's Speak Up Poetry club meeting. While peeking at the group, he was invited to join them. Drake said "I eventually went in there like, what can I lose? I went in there; I was injured but I was interested in the presentation." Meanwhile, not only did Drake later join the organization, but he also went from becoming the club's treasurer, to being its vice president, and then its president. His interview further uncovered his other accomplishments with his growing leadership skills which he attributed to Dr. Ward and the Center. Drake confirmed that Dr. Ward coached and supported him and few students in developing thriving clubs and groomed him

(Drake) to assist with teaching and leading some aspects of his classes. Drake reminisced affectionately, “It wasn’t like he [Dr. Ward] was a person who only lectures you, he was actually involved in your life.”

Participants confirmed that upon becoming students at MCU and getting involved in the Black Cultural Center, they found that the Center engaged them culturally to further develop and enhance their identities. Furthermore, Larry declared that he found the Center to be a very open environment. He described the Center in the following way:

> A very comfortable environment which is willing to always help a student, always willing to give a student that opportunity to learn more about the black culture itself. And they give you that comfort level to learn more about your identity as a minority. It gives you the knowledge to learn more about the black culture.

Max suggested that the Center assisted students in developing a new sense of identity. He saw the Center as a creative space and a place for understanding Black history and the African diaspora. He attested “I will say that the Center is a hub for the African American diaspora, and it connects all the timeline of African Americans starting out in Africa to where we are today, and especially during the Civil Rights era with Harriet Tubman and MLK Jr.”

Ross recounted the benefit he derived from the Center as related to his understanding of how serious the problem of racial relations is in the U.S., and how he as a West African might be perceived in the U.S. as an African American, as well as what that all means. He acknowledged this with:

> I learned a lot, because like I said, that was during my second and third year in the US. I see firsthand the African Americans' struggles, the struggles that African Americans have here! Even though we have struggles in Africa and in West Africa [home country}, it is not racial. So, being in Black Studies Center and talking to those guys, and hearing more stories, makes me understand that this is major. This is major here and I'm going to be part of this because they will not see me as an African. I am seen as an African American from the outside.

Pulled into a mindset. Personal Development means the development of progressive characteristics and skills during a student's college experience, including leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009). Similarly, Webster dictionary describes mindset as "a mental attitude or inclination… a fixed state of mind … a mental inclination, tendency, or habit" (https://www.merriam-webster.com). The expression "pulled into a mindset" can be explained as "frame of mind," and there are two types of mindsets: the fixed-mindset, which is not prone to change, and the growth-mindset, which is open to learning, improving in intelligence, and adapting (Dweck, 2016). Therefore, this section further discusses how the participants perceived their association with the Center either as having changed or enhanced their mindset along the way, including well after their graduation and to the present time.

During his interview, Drake provided a glimpse of his much earlier speech problem and the Center's influence on him. He confessed that he was extremely

introverted because he stuttered until the age of 12 or 13, and that “I still get it every now and then when I get excited.” Because of his stutter, he would not speak about anything due his mindset that speaking would incur him public humiliation; instead, he would write his thoughts down and throw the scribble somewhere. He said that at the Center, everybody had a voice, and people did not criticize or humiliate one another for their ideas or difficulties. Rather, people were actually discussing and building each other up, “I would've never seen myself as the president of an organization, or helping other people build organizations. That definitely wasn't in my perspective”. He noted that he was previously satisfied with his school life of just attending to his student-worker job with the Parking Department and going to class or going home. “That was pretty much my school life till I went to the Black Studies Center.”

Furthermore, Drake inferred that even though everyone who came to the Center had different ideals, different perspectives, and came from different places, they usually agreed or agreed to disagree amicably. He described how the Center enabled him to learn to seize developmental opportunities. With a sigh, he reminisced on how the Dr. Ward (the Center’s previous director) would usually pull him into a can-do mindset:

> The fact that Dr. Ward would put me on the spot making me teach workshops, that taught me to jump on opportunities instead of just running from them or being shy about them. He would tell me “There are other people who would support you. Sometimes you got to search a little bit for them, but there are other people that will support you. So, don't just look at your circumstance.” This always increased my confidence because home life was still a little crazy then. So, the Center was paradise.

Max also confirmed the Center's influence on his mindset development by narrating how it assisted him in maturing, improving his grades, and valuing education: The Center made me more mature. I don't do any immature stuff anymore. It made me more intellectual, more intelligent…Oh yeah, made me more independent. Yeah, that definitely! I am able to write better because reading up on all the black activists really expanded my vocabulary. My grades have gotten better over time. I definitely didn't value education as much, but once I actually got into college and engaged with the Center, it's definitely made me more humble.

The above comments seem to resonate with the staff participants' contention that the Center offered a source of community that sustained and enriched students' Black identity. For instance, in describing the Center's intended contribution to participants' identity enrichment, Mr. Parker stated that "The Cultural Center provides a base for someone [students] to see familiar things that allow them to continue their regular growth of their own identity that comes from family…so that they don't feel estranged or deal with cognitive dissonance and feel that they have to abandon their community in exchange for coming to MCU."

Academic and Social Resources

In my interaction with research participants, I found that they narrated how the Center provided both academic and social resources to assist them with navigating the campus culture and achieving academic success. Not only was the Black Cultural Center like a second home for participants, but it also enabled them to maneuver the environment in both the MUC community as well as the external or local community

settings. The participants acknowledged that the Center helped them gain academic success. Ross referenced the Center's assistance with this by saying that "The Black Studies Center is a really good place to go to learn about, African American culture, a good place to pick up certain positive habits. It's a good place to socialize and get to know not just students, but also faculty and staff. It is really a good place to be part of." Therefore, the Center's impacts in providing academic and social resources were explained under the following four subthemes: Academic Success, Other Campus Activities, Giving Back, and Marginalization on the PWI Campus.

Academic success. Being aware that the Black population is mainly marginalized and impoverished, the participants viewed the Center as beacon of light that guided Black students to success. For example, they described how the Center provided tools for success to users. Drake recounted how the Center assisted with some of his academic needs, including providing hands-on or real-life experiences through the Center's match-up mentoring program where the center collaborated with local community business owners. He added that the Center had a non-written agreement with students whereby the Center staff made textbooks available to frequent Center student users when necessary. Drake explained that there was an actual closet at the Center where people threw in their old textbooks. Any student could take the books if they needed them but had to return them when they were done.

> As far as in the school, I didn't have to pay for many books. I didn't have to pay for many books or many supplies at all. The resources were there for the people that were there all the time, if they see you all the time and they knew you needed a book and they had it, you will have the book… If

> you went through Black Studies, somebody was going to get you what you needed… you will never be without to succeed.

The Centers' academic assistance was not only on campus. The administration knew that engaging in external events would be impactful to students. According to Mr. Parker (Center's Coordinator) the Center engaged African American and international students in the "Soul of [City] Tour," to promote the rich history of African Americans in [City]; and show that "in-spite of the ongoing oppression on Blacks, African Americans still have the agency to contribute to students' individual growth."

Kalos acknowledged that the resources he got from the Center made his interactions with those outside the Center more productive. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to learn through attending conferences sponsored by the Center and other collaborators:

> And just being able to go to those other Black Studies Centers outside of Midwest County University and being able to go to events and listen to different lectures and topics. I got access to a lot of different books Dr. Ward and the Center had. I was able to utilize all those resources with campus organizations outside of Center, as well as with other grassroots movements.

Larry confirmed that Dr. Baker (the Center's current director*)* always had different ways of using his network's social capital to assist him (Larry) with any type of ideas in regard to his graduate school African American studies program:

> He always has a way to link me up with the right people and guide me in a right direction. Prior to me being involved in the Center, I learned a lot on my own as far as researching different information. But I feel like now I know so much more. I didn't know what Chicago style was until I took Dr. Baker's class. I didn't know that style of writing.

Furthermore, when Larry felt that he was not receiving the appropriate attention from his assigned academic advisor, the Center came to his rescue as he affirmed: "I set up a meeting to meet with Dr. Baker. He got more into it and told me the type of classes that I would need to make this my academic minor". Also, during the pandemic mass shutdown with institutions operating remotely, the Center staff continued to reach out to students. Larry appreciated the Center's staff's continued assistance even when staff were furloughed. "I still talk to Mr. Parker at least once a week. I had to do my summer research with the institution's STEM program and there was nobody in my major's office to help."

On a similar note, Ross's response affirmed that the Center provided him with opportunities to interact with some professors who taught some of his courses, allowing him to receive additional guidance from them:

> Being able to be at Center and as well as work there as a student assistant was helpful. And sometimes when there was no work to be done around the area, the program coordinator, Mr. Parker, would tell me, "Just go and study." So, to be able to actually be at work, getting paid, and also being pushed by them to go and study, was very, very fortunate for me. So, I would definitely appreciate them for that. Absolutely!

***Other campus activities*.** Having noted how engaging in some external events helped them in enhancing their self-confidence and academics, student participants narrated how they learned to gradually step out of their comfort zone. They began participating in non-Center student organizations, as well as in promoting some of the Center's activities campus wide and within local communities.

When asked if he had participated in any student clubs, sports, or activities, Kalos shared that he was a member of the Muslim Students Association. However, he said that he would rather go to the Center than anywhere else on campus. He also added that the benefits he derived from the Center included attending off-campus interstate conferences, such as the Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC) conference with Dr. Ward and members of the Speak-Up Poetry slam. "There were some professors at the ABCC conference that we network with during that time…. being able to meet a lot of different professors at other Black Cultural Centers was one very special thing." Kalos further explained how the Center helped improve his leadership skills and how he applied his acquired knowledge to various opportunities on and off campus:

> I'm able to use all that knowledge outside of school and outside of the university. For instance, when talking to people or I am in another class that touches on something already familiar to me, and they are only touching the shallow surface of the knowledge that I already obtained outside of that class, I'm able to contribute something. Then also when I join organizations outside of Black Studies and outside of the Black Study organizations, I am able to use all those networking skills and organizing

skills in other settings and atmospheres that didn't have a teacher. Being able to use that same knowledge and mentorship and transfer the skills to younger people underneath, is very satisfying.

Marginalization on the PWI campus. This subtheme reflects other ways the participants talked about exclusion/marginalization/disconnect that existed between the Center and other campus structures. An example of this marginalization/disconnect is when Drake relayed that his experience serving as president of the Speak Up Poetry slam and supporting the organization were not easy tasks. Drake revealed his intense struggle, as president, to secure funding from the University's Student Government Association (SGA) for this Black Studies Center's organization. He inferred that the SGA begrudged them of funding and kept giving him excuses to not grant his organization funding. This denial of funding continued even after he learned how to properly complete and submit the required application. However, with a sigh he explained how help usually came from the Center staff's intervention:

> It was still a struggle the whole way through. We would have to do these long presentations, while the other student organizations would come in for two, three minutes. We would be in there trying to explain the Cultural Center, conferences, and importance of the Black Studies Center…At first, we didn't have that much help, all we had was Dr. Ward. He was standing in for us, saying, "Hey, you need to give some respect to these organizations." We only got money when Dr. Ward puts their feet to the fire…It was just a constant thing every semester and it

> actually built me business-wise, because I had to be on top of my game every semester.

On a similar note, Dr. Baker also conveyed that he has been receiving ongoing complaints from both African American and African students that they do not feel included by Midwest County University. “The students say they see the Cultural Center as the only place they have on campus where they feel comfortable, feel at home, and feel a sense of community.” He then affirmed that he started dialoguing with MCU’s president on this and other related issues.

Giving back. In order to give-back, one must have something worth giving; this could be money or skills. In-spite of the hardship that obtaining funds from SGA caused, Drake said that experience sharpened his business negotiation skills. With excitement, Drake with excitement informed me that along with the Speak Up Poetry slam organization officers, he began leading workshops on how to get money from SGA to fund their events to coach other student groups who were trying to develop organizations.

> Eventually it got to the point where it was so many of us, and SGA couldn't deny us the funding money. They couldn't deny because we were doing everything right. We were crossing every T dotting every I. We were getting the African Student Organization money. We were helping everybody get money. It was amazing because it was a long, hard fight. I don't know how it is exactly right now because I've been out of the loop probably the last year.

As a regular participant at the Center, Larry noticed that the campus community outside of the Center was not as welcoming as the Center. He described the general campus as "like a clique, it is almost like high school…you can take classes with people and they can still see you on campus and won't speak, say hello or anything…we can't socialize or talk. They don't go outside and try to learn something else." Larry was not deterred by this observation; rather, he joined the Helping You Through Peer Education (H.Y.P.E.) club. He explained that the H.Y.P.E. team members work as peer supporters to students from various races (not just African American students) who are experiencing various emotional issues. including rape crisis, alcoholism, anxiety, molestation or bullying. He reiterated that "You'd be a certified Peer Educator, which I am.…So, you're there as a certified peer educator, you go through all these different types of training." Therefore, Larry's take on navigating the campus community included giving back by assisting students in need.

Motivation/Inspiration

The Center has been known as a place that student participants collaborated, studied, and thrived. It assisted with their Black identity development and enhancement as well as academic success. This change or enhancement was achieved because the students felt motivated and inspired. For example, Drake discussed how he did not give-up when he was denied funding for Speak-Up. He persisted and used his developed skills to assist others. Max described developing better study habits through encouragement from the Center, and furthermore, he stopped doing "immature things." And Ross was inspired to study when he had nothing to do during his student assistantship work hours at the Center. Participants' acknowledgement of being motivated or inspired due to their

connection with the Center is organized into these three sub-themes: Mentoring, Revitalization and Transformation, and Community Advancement**.**

Mentoring. Mentors assume duties of counselor, teacher, adviser, or guide (Hansman, 2020). These have been the actions that the mentioned Center staff-participants provide the student users. These participants affirmed the positive impact that mentoring, and faculty interaction (especially Black faculty members) had on students' successes. The research participants defined this sub-theme when referencing the Center and their experience.

Larry declared how supportive the Center staff had been since he become a part of the Africana Studies Program, saying that it felt like family to him. He espoused how the former director Dr. Ward always guided him in a direction that helped him become a better person and student. He added that the Black Studies Center offered minorities like him much support that gave them confidence that they can do whatever they set their minds to do. He narrated his experience as follows:

> The Center changed me on a positive perspective. It made me challenge myself even more….I wasn't thinking about pushing myself to that next level and to graduate school. I figured I can still maintain a good professional life with my bachelor's double major. However, I had Dr. Walker (Center's interim director) for my African American Experience class, and she pushed me into pursuing my further studies, regardless of my age. So, those two people inspired me. Dr. Walker pushed me into that mindset of wanting to go ahead and pursue my PhD, to be honest. She told me, you know, I didn't get mine until my fifties.

Kalos confirmed that **"**It's definitely been a place where we've seen growth in knowledge, and it was pretty much like a haven, like a factory; and having that knowledge is an asset. It's a place of mentorship. And we got it from a lot of the different professors there."

Revitalization and transformation. African Americans endured slavery and continued to experience on-going discrimination that positioned them as second-class citizens and denied their educational rights. (Berlin, 2010; Harkavy & Hodges, 2012). However, the current uprisings from police brutality and racial injustice energized the "non-conforming" Black males who are publicly advocating for change. Note that as mentioned in earlier chapters "acting White," or "non-conformist" are terms used by some Blacks to classify their peers, such as students who choose to participate in non-ethnic student organizations. However, these Black male students categorized as acting White, usually aim to educate the non-Black students on Black perspectives in order to revitalize their Black identity. These students practice and foster cross cultural interaction, (Ogbu, 2004; Harper & Quaye 2007; Simmons, 2013).

Larry's experience at MCU coincidentally typifies the action that could be described as "acting white" He said that upon surveying student organizations on campus, he realized that it is very rare to see African Americans with a group of White students, and most of the time he saw Black students with Black students. In explaining how he decided to make a difference he said:

> We stay with our people, and they stay with their own people. That's why I am part of my National Honor Fraternity. That's why I'm a chairperson in a diversity committee, because prior to me becoming a member in that

> fraternity I have always been, like, why is there never Blacks involved. They have a history of predominantly White organization. Why is there not a diversity part of this fraternity? So, this is what I bring …Now this is where we try to make a difference for students after we leave so that they don't have to feel left out just because they're Black, they're just as entitled. They should be able to fulfill the same obligations and be able to have that same community service as a white person. So, why can't it be a more diversify fraternity as well?

Furthermore, when asked about the result of his pioneering action, Larry declared [with a smile] that due to his action some barriers began to be broken:

> I actually saw a transition from the new presidents away from the previous presidents of the fraternity who kept that non-diverse mentality. It has changed with the most recent presidents. They put more effort into making it more diverse. My fraternity is aware and able to come and help. They like to do a lot of community work. They come to the black community to help and have the same type of initiative and attitude for the next place. So, I have seen a transition. I have, I can say that.

Drake verified that he had also noted changes in his view on situations even those issues that are hurtful to him. He confessed "Yeah! It helped me not be just reactive. When you come from a point of pain, we can often be reactive against everything.

Therefore, as I had said before, I was non-reactive most of the time, then I was pretty bad when I did react".

Similarly, since the Black population is not homogeneous from within, following his migration to the U.S., Ross did not rely on his West African cultural up-bringing alone. He and his family understood that his survival in the U.S. necessitated him to discover and assimilate the fine line between the two Black cultures in order to readjust his lens on society. And the Center was an ideally enriched and safe environment for him to do so.

Community advancement and activism. The MCU's Black Cultural Center has always collaborated with the local Black community. As previously discussed, the Center staff networked with the local community, and provide students with real life experience through their community network. 2020 was a year of intense local and global outcry and the Center was already positioned to respond given activities participants narrated having occurred before 2020. Therefore, the Center became a stronghold, which provided a safe place for both students and the community to plan acceptable peaceful activism, demonstrations, and/or de-escalation.

Drake disclosed his personal connection to the unrest and the Center's assistance towards peaceful demonstrations. He narrated his experience in the Center as well as the Center's involvement and connections with the local community. In retrospect he said:

> A couple of weeks before Tamir Rice was shot by the police, my brother was actually shot by the police a couple neighborhoods away. So, I was already trying to get justice for him. And then Tanesha Anderson got killed by the police, and then Tamir Rice. I couldn't take it no more, so I just

> started reaching out to different local organizations. So, with permission from Dr Wade, the Center's previous director, we started having meetings every Saturday. All the community leaders would come to Black Studies Center, and we would have these meetings. We were building up, and it led to some of these marches… we had a big impact on those marches.

Kalos also described his similar experience from that time. He referred to the rally they had in the institution's Student Center, at which the Cultural Center ensured that there was police presence because it was a collaboration between outside organizations and MCU organizations. This rally was to protest police brutality and killings of Blacks. He explained that:

> Around the time during 2014, when the Tamir rice incident happened and Timothy Russell, Melissa Williams, and Eric Garner, Mike Brown stuff happened, we used the Black Studies to lead Black Student Union Speak Up jam…And we also linked up with a lot of different organizations outside of the institution. Black Lives Matter was one of them and there were other grassroots movement, Black on Black Crime Prevention organizations, and the Black Man's Army organization. And we would bring them to Midwest County University.

Furthermore, Kalos inferred that his transformation inspired him to look beyond the Center towards giving back to both the University and local community. He was able to use the knowledge he gained to assist others outside of the Center and outside of the university. For instance, when he talked to people outside of the Center and Black

organizations, he used his networking and organizing skills in settings that did not have a teacher or leader. He said, “I’ll be able to use that same knowledge and mentorship and pass that on to younger people.”

Racial Interaction

Despite the government shutdown due to COVID restrictions in 2020, the continued racial unrest and police brutality on Blacks incited outcries and demonstrations nationwide. The unrest was sparked by the death of George Floyd (a Black man) on May 25, 2020. Floyd’s death was caused by Derek Chauvin a White police officer who knelt on Floyd’s neck continuously for over nine minutes, even when Floyd was whispering “I can’t breathe” (www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html). Nationwide, media’s constant bombardment of citizens with reports of police brutality and systemic racism against Blacks, resulted in various reactions including peaceful protests such as by Black Lives Matter, and rioting by various groups. For instance, Ailworth & Wernau (2020) reported in The Wall Street Journal that Governor Tony Evers of Wisconsin declared a state of emergency for several days. This was enacted following the unrest caused by the August 2020 unjust shooting in the back of Mr. Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man by the police in Kenosha, Wisconsin. One resident of that neighborhood, Ms. Katie Gray, was reported to have said “I’m devastated for multiple reasons. I’m devastated because this man got shot in front of his three kids.”

Locally, my research student-participants indicated how their experiences from the Center continued to influence them in positive ways through that overwhelming and racially charged period. Those of them who got involved confirmed that they only participated in peaceful demonstrations. They attributed their enhanced racial interaction

to having been positively *pulled into a mindset* by the Center's influence without which they would have reacted adversely. The student-participants' positive interracial reaction seemed to validate Mr. Parker's (the Center's coordinator's) views on the Center's contributions to participants' racial interaction enhancement. Mr. Parker indicated that the Center supported students through enculturation, which means that the Center builds on the culture the students learned in childhood and support them in their continued growth. Passionately he added:

> This identity discussion…challenges the cognitive dissonance that makes Blacks think that they have only to connect with White students in-order to be successful…The Center encourages them to develop an identity that allows them to see that African Americans, and African diaspora can be respected for what we bring to the table, and that we have wealth to share, to correct some of the wrong…We are still in the work of correcting the mind-set that distances African Americans, Africans, and African descendants from the rest of society.

Coincidentally, in this research context student-participants referred to their growth-mindset (explained earlier). For instance, when attributing his revitalized identity to his transformational development and affiliation with the Center, Drake professed that:

> When you have knowledge to back up what you're doing, you can use the knowledge and wisdom that was passed to you instead of just going to the emotion. And, and I think that's one of the main things I got out of the Center. I still get emotional. When I was in the front of those rallies in the

> marches, I was very emotional when I got back at the end of day, I had to control that emotion to be productive, and that's something I learned in the Center, from knowing all the different point of views and realizing that there's a lot of point of views. I might not always be right.

In addition, Drake also narrated an example of how his identity development transformation enabled him to improve his inter-racial relations. He explained that during the Obama election he encountered a very disturbing racial confrontation from some of the MCU's White students who were also participating in rallies. He inferred that while the White students had the right to rally, they were engaging in hateful rallies, and would have hateful and loud meetings where they were spreading hate. Kalos added that:

> It was also during the time where everybody was building this freedom thing, that everybody should be able to say what they gotta say, but they were dominating the conversation until a lot of different organizations, which were supported by Black Studies actually started doing more and different events, and those events were more based on love. We invited the White student groups saying, "Hey, come play some games, come eat, share some love." That's how we countered it and I don't think a lot of that would have taken place if it wasn't for Black Studies Center.

Ross' recount of his interracial relations is a bit different, perhaps due to upbringing in West Africa. He used the words such as "beautiful things, *great people, terrible people*, and *hope"* in describing his stance on inter-racial relations. He relayed

that he has also experienced *beautiful things* by people from other races. He also revealed that his closest friend who passed away recently from cancer, was Caucasian, and that they met in high school. Ross summed it up thoughtfully by saying that:

> When you've met *great people* [from another race] and you've also met their *terrible people*, it helps you not get pulled into the mindset that everybody from [from that race] is bad. Being able to have that exposure to diversity and being exposed to so many different people from different walks of life prepares you for that. I could definitely understand why some people who have not experienced good things from anybody from a certain race or group would think they're all bad. Especially the police, for example, I can definitely understand why a Black person would not want to trust any single cop. It makes sense to think you always will lose, and it does cause a lot of what we go through. But, you know, the exposure to different people from different races and stuff help. I mean, the *good ones give you hope.*

Max's statement earlier in this chapter indicated that he had attended a predominantly White high school in his middle-class neighborhood. This became an asset for him in maintaining his inter-racial relation capabilities at MCU. He said, "There was a decent number of other races that I had seen and interacted with, and I would say in particular I was able to connect more with Asians and the Arabs too, because they're also minority on campus." On his own terms Larry struck out to create opportunities for racial interaction for himself and other Black students in the campus community by initiating

diversity into his on-campus fraternity organization which had always been pro White. Therefore, it seemed like participant determined that cultivating positive racial interactive skills requires confidently going beyond one's comfort zone.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided study findings by describing participants' views of what the Center meant to them. The research attempted to answer the question as to: in the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center? I explored the answer to that over-arching question by breaking up the question into the three sub questions of: (1) How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students? (2) How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs? (3) How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students? By analyzing participants' interviews, the following five themes emerged: Like Home & Family, Identity Development, Academic and Social Resources, Motivation/Inspiration, Racial Interactions. The themes also had sub-themes including Community and Culture, Pulled into a Mindset, Academic Success, Other Campus Activities, Giving Back, Marginalization on PWI Campus, Mentoring, Revitalization and Transformation, Community Advancement and Activism. This process helped to confirm what the Center meant to the student-participants.

The research shared both the alumni participants' past experiences with the Center, as well as how it remains a permanent fixture in their lives through the years. Current students also shared similar accounts of the Center's impact on them as the alumni. Lastly, staff participants expressed some of their perspectives on the influence of the Center which seemed to be validated by the student participants' expressions about the Center. In the next chapter, the overarching research question, and its accompanying sub-questions (as stated earlier in this chapter), will be answered and discussed. Future policy, research, and practice recommendations will also be provided.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assists these males in negotiating the barriers posed by the predominantly white institution's (PWI) campus-cultures and enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspiring for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e., the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009). Through the interviews, participants attested to the impact of the Center in their lives. Therefore, this chapter provides a discussion that responds to the overarching research question and its accompanying sub-questions were answered.

The following are the research questions, beginning with the overarching research question:

In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center?

Research Sub-questions:

1. How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?
2. How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?
3. How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

Since the answer to the overarching research question is deduced from participants' responses to the research's three sub-questions. I therefore decided to begin by first answering the sub-research questions and then address the overarching question last.

Research Sub-question 1

How does the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center contribute to the enhancement of the identity development of its African American male students?

The answer to this sub-question was found in the exploration of the theme Identity Development and its subthemes, Community and Culture, and Pulled into a Mindset. In chapter four, a brief synopsis of the student-participants' background prior to coming to the Center was given. Each participant had acknowledged that they grew-up in a variety of neighborhoods, including, middle class, impoverished, and immigrant communities. Therefore, each participant evidently had developed some sort of identity from their families, their high schools, or from their peers. However, when they come to the new institutional environment at Midwest County University, it became clear to these participants that through their association with the Center, they learned tools to enhance their abilities to maneuver some challenging situations.

Larry confirmed the Centers contribution to his development with statements such as "As far as academic life and prior to attending college and the Center, I had dropped out of high school in 11th grade for family issues. I never had anybody in my family that inspired me in regard to education, or to pursue life in academical aspect." Larry drew inspiration from the Center to remain and complete his studies in spite of all odds. Drake who used to be an introvert and stutterer confirmed that Dr. Ward (the Center's previous director) coached and supported him and other students in developing thriving clubs, as well as groomed him to assist with leading some aspects of his classes. Drake attributed his identity enhancement to the Center community because everybody had a voice at the Center, and people did not criticize or humiliate one another for their ideas or difficulties. Students engaged in discussions that build up each other. Furthermore, Ross who migrated from West Africa, attributed the Center for schooling him on coping with racism both on and off campus. "So, being in Black Studies Center and talking to those

guys, and hearing more stories, makes me understand that this [racism] is major here and I'm going to be part of it. No one will see me as an African, I am seen as an African American from the outside."

The participants perceived that their association with the Center either changed or enhanced their mindset along the way, including well after their graduation to the present time. In line with Cuseo (2009), participants grew in their civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation during their student college experiences. Furthermore, Mr. Parker (Center Coordinator) also concurred that student "continue the regular growth of their own identity so that they don't feel estranged or deal with cognitive dissonance and feel that they have to abandon their community in exchange for coming to MCU." The Center helped to enhance participants' identity development.

Overall, study participants seemed convinced that through association with Center, their identities were either developed or enhanced more positively. Larry felt inspired, Drake felt supported, Ross's coping skills as a black immigrant was enhanced. Therefore, the center was visibly impactful in the participants identity development.

Research Sub-question 2

> *How do African American male students perceive the role the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center plays to assist them in navigating campus culture and activities to achieve academic success in PWIs?*

This research question is answered by the various subthemes within the theme Academic and Social Resources. In my interactions with participants, I found that they

narrated how the Center provided both academic and social resources to assist them with navigating the campus culture to achieve academic success. Not only was the Black Cultural Center like a second home for participants, but it also enabled them to maneuver the environment in both the MCU community and the external or local community settings. The participants acknowledged that the Center helped them gain academic success.

Ross confirmed that being at the Black studies assisted him attaining good habits that helped him maneuver the campus. He met different MCU faculty and staff who readily answered his questions and gave him suggestions. Drake and Kalos were appreciative that tools to maneuver the campus were not only acquired at MCU's Center but also through their attendance at various out-of-state conferences sponsored by the Center, where they compared and formulated strategies with other Black student conference attendees. Larry also mentioned how he did not know about the professional Chicago style of writing until he met the Centers current director Dr. Baker. He credited Dr. Baker for "always guiding me in the direction that helped make me a better person, individual and student. Larry continued by narrating how the former interim director Dr. Walker also encouraged him to continue his Education in spite of his age. Larry emphasized, "The Center is very supportive, and it means so much to me because one day I want to be the person there."

Notably, participants sincere gratitude could be seen in their emotional expressions when discussing what the Center meant to them in a way that was extraordinary. Flickers of delight, ownership and contentment were visible on their faces. Verbally they equated the Center to home or their second home, which justifies

such emotions. They felt comfortable and safe in the Center's non-threatening and supportive environment. The student-participants were readily open to learn instead of pretending to know solutions to issues. They believed in MCU's Center's staff members and directors who were like their role models. Participants willingly accepted constructive criticism or feedbacks which helped to "stir them towards their personal and academic growth."

Research Sub-question 3

How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate transformational learning and interracial relations of African American male students?

Interracial interaction has always been a sensitive issue for African Americans since the

time of slavery. From participants' perspective, it seems like the Center assisted them in developing coping skills and strategies for tackling racial discrepancies by pulling them into a new mindset. Drake stated that the Center also welcomed some non-African American organizations including the Muslim Student Association, African Students Association, and other racial and ethnic student organization. These organizations held their meetings within the Black Studies facility. Through interacting with other races at the Center and on campus (including Whites), participants began thinking outside the box.

Drake attested to how the Center contributed to his interracial relationship growth by narrating how instead of engaging in a fight with some White students who tried to instigate an uproar during the Obama's election rally, he invited them to come join in the

Black students' games and entertainments. Ross shared his personal experience of meeting good people in races which he considered to be bad races helped him to deflect from the generalization that everyone from that race is bad. This attitude, along with his introspective confidence he gained from the Center, helped in improving Ross's interracial interaction, especially as a Black immigrant. Kalos inferred that he "defeats racism with knowledge which helps him to stand his ground."

Evidently, the Center seemed to have had a positively impactful long-term influence on participants' transformation. The student participants all inferred that before engaging with the Center, their reactions to various situation might have been adverse. Instead, their interviews revealed the student- participants' individual transformation.

Answering the Overarching Research Question:

> *In the context of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), what meaning do higher education African American male students give to the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center?*

From the research participants' responses to the sub research questions, one could decipher segments of what the Center means to them individually. However, during the interviews the most outstanding and symbolic word was "home." It was used by all participants at one time or the other to convey what the Center means to them. The Center was like home to them or their second home. The question then becomes: How did the participants conceptualize home?

As earlier described in Chapter Four, from the research participants perceptions "Home" is where one feels relaxed and let one's guard down. Furthermore, Drake used the words "anchor" for our people into a different world" to describe the Center's

function to its student and local community users especially during the era of police brutality. He explained, “We need somewhere where we can speak intelligently in a safe place, and we don’t have too many of those places without people just trying to attack you. Black Studies is a protected environment.”

On a similar note, since a home is one’s fortress, Kalos emotionally and emphatically stated:

> Oh, the Black Culture Center has to exist because historically, Black Cultural Centers have always been like a central part of black movements! Even when you go back to when Black Cultural Center started, they played a role in the Black Panther party and a lot of the Black Liberation Armies. And the Centers were a place where you can go to get knowledge….So, if you don't have Black Studies or Black Cultural Center at a campus like Midwest County University, or other campuses that are considered PWI, you'll never really get to Black students. You'll never learn about Black history. You'll be a Black college student on a campus that have no identity because everywhere you go, you're always in a White space. You'll never learn about or know what life is like being a Black student on campus. You'll never learn about [the real] Black history, and Black figures. All that stuff will kind of get lost without Black Cultural Centers….So, it'll always be a place where you can go to seek knowledge, talk to different people, and network with other black students from different Black Studies or cultural centers across the country.

Furthermore, Kalos' quote above also shows how the Center provided important elements which drive success. He mentioned the origin and influence of the Black Cultural Centers in the identity enhancement of the early Black movement participants through acquisition *of accurate* Black history knowledge. He also inferred that the Center was a *safe space* for Blacks which conjures a feeling of being home with one's supportive family. It appeared that the Center's meaning to these users is encompassed in the five themes that emerged from the data: Like Home & Family, Identity Development, Academic and Social Resources, Motivation/Inspiration, Racial Interactions, as well as their sub themes, as discussed previously in Chapter Four. The research sub questions pinpointed practical applications of the themes. Answers to those questions revealed each participant's conviction about a specific section, and which I also found to resonate amongst them. Therefore, in response to the overarching question, the study's findings suggest that the meaning given to Black Cultural Center connected deeply to the study-participants through the cultivation of space and of relationship conducive to their academic success. In this way, graduation aspirations and interpersonal skill development were evident in the narratives of students and staff affiliated with the Center.

Discussion

This section provides synthesis and conclusions deduced from the study themes as well as relevant literature. By analyzing participants' interviews, the following five themes emerged: Like Home & Family, Identity Development, Academic and Social Resources, Motivation/Inspiration, Racial Interactions. The themes were broken down further into sub-themes including Community and Culture, Pulled into a Mindset, Academic Success, Other Campus Activities, Giving Back, Marginalization on PWI

Campus, Mentoring, Revitalization and Transformation, Community Advancement and Activism. Each of these themes and subthemes allowed me to examine each participant's view in specific areas of commonality across participant narratives. Responses revealed that participants attributed the Center for their development, enhancement, and transformation which led to positive social lives and successful graduation from higher education.

Furthermore, as stated previously, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the perspectives of African American undergraduate male students in an urban predominantly white institution campus, as to how (or if at all) the Black Cultural Center prepares and assists these males in negotiating the barriers posed by the PWI's campus-cultures and enable them to achieve academic success. Academic success means *(1) aspirating for timely graduation (i.e., within six years if not before), and (2) cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e. the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009).

Data from the interviews of five student-participants and three staff-participants further illuminated the crux of this research above. The data encompassed in the themes provide mostly positive conclusions.

However, though the first definition of success is *aspirating for timely graduation (i.e. within six years if not before),* I found that time to graduate for student participants was dependent of their specific experiences during their undergraduate years. This is because Kalos, Drake, and Larry all transferred to MCU after beginning their

undergraduate work at other institutions or stopped out of school, resulting in them taking them longer than six years to graduate. Ross came from a West African country with a different educational background and requirements, and this might have prolonged his graduation as well. The only participant with a graduation time of six years or less was Max, who is on track for a timely graduation. Max had also attested to the Center's contributions to his improved study habit and adult identity development. This pattern of longer duration in years between the beginning and end of one's studies points to the conditions faced by Black men in higher education in general and in predominantly White institutions more specifically.

The second definition of success is: *cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth* (i.e., the development of progressive characteristics and skills including: leadership, character, civic responsibility, social and emotional intelligence, and diversity tolerance or appreciation, during student's college experience (Cuseo, 2009). In this respect, all the student-participants acknowledged the impact of the Center in either developing or enhancing their leadership skills and civic responsibilities. Participants confirmed that upon becoming students at MCU and getting involved in the Black Cultural Center, they found that the Center engaged them culturally to further develop and enhance their identity. The sub-theme Pulled into a Mindset is the result of participants allowing themselves to be positively influenced to develop self-motivation towards progressive characteristics and skills. Drake who used to stutter exemplified this when he reiterated how "Dr. Ward would put me on the spot making me teach workshops, that taught me to jump on opportunities instead of just running from them or being shy about them." Multiple stories of mentoring and of peer support suggest the

Black Cultural Center created the space for cultivating interpersonal skills towards personal growth.

Revisiting the Research Paradigm and Theoretical Frameworks

To effectively answer the research questions, the social constructivist paradigm was applied to capture participants' individual perspectives of the phenomenon. According to Creswell (2013) social constructivism does not argue the existence of an absolute truth. Ontologically, social constructivism contends that multiple realities exist, and realities are determined from researcher-participant collaboration. Also, the axiological assumption allowed for consideration of the researcher's subjectivity and values in the interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Theoretical frameworks are "empirical or quasi empirical theory of social and/or psychological process, at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena" (Anfara & Mertz 2006, p. xxvii; 2015). The three theories of (1) Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross, 1971, 1991); (2) Psychosocial Theory on Seven Vectors of Identity Development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993); and (3) Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997), were applicable to the student-participants across the board.

Relating the Literature

As stated earlier, my interest in this research was sparked when I found that in spite of the U.S. Department of Education's report in 2009 documenting the high dropout rate of African Americans from institutions of higher learning, the reports showed less interest in the coverage of African American male students than in female Black students. I explored the history of the African American self-education and formal education from

slavery because of its crucial impact in the present-day situation (Taylor & Snyder, 2012, Harper & Harris, 2012, Berlin, 2010). It also pays to remember that following the desegregation after WWII, PWI institutions were not prepared for the influx of Blacks, and that this led to civil disobedience and demand for safe-havens by Black students and for Black students (Mingle, 1981, Pittman, 1994, and Patton 2005). According to Cooper (2014) the Black students' revolution resulted in the instituting Black Cultural Centers from the 1960s.

While the literature might show that many African American males drop out of school, my research reveals that students who attend PWI's with a safe-haven BCC or related programs and engage in the Center's activities have better chances of succeeding academically and socially. This is because while African American males do struggle with developing their racial identity within the American society (Irving & Hudley, 2008) and are found to have "cultural mistrust and oppressional cultural attitude" (p. 681), they are responsive to the ways the Center nurtures them by providing coping mechanisms which lead to transformation.

This was evidenced in participants comments on the impact of the Center in their lives. Drake elaborated on how Dr. Ward (the Center's Previous Director) "stayed active so that we weren't going out of bounds, but he was staying hands off enough so that we could express ourselves." Furthermore, Drake also attributed the impact of the Center in the students' lives by affirming that when the Black student-group were bullied by White during rally-marches, rather than flare up, the Black student-group invited the White students over for games and refreshments.

Limitations

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the current study is even more limited considering the reduction of student-participants from 12 to five and three staff-participants, as well as by the restrictions on data collection methods. The study is also limited because it did not include participant students from other similar PWI institutions. Overall, qualitative case study research method is not generalizable. It is best used for gaining insight into and making meaning of an experience for further explorative planning.

Alternatively, the pandemic restriction and the turbulence of the racial justice movement may have allowed for greater exploration among participants at a rare time in history. It prompted dealing with the emotional impact of the deadly disease, within a climate of racial injustice. The research timing enabled student-participants to display their transformation in self-confidence, and racial interaction. However, since this case study is instrumental in its approach where the phenomenon of the study, Black Cultural Centers, is studied in a single site, there are patterns I the findings that may be useful in research on Black Cultural Centers in other higher education settings (Stake, 2000), particularly predominantly White institutions.

Study Implications

My intent for this study was to gain insight and see if and how the Center influences African American male undergraduate students in both their academic and social success. My research showed that the Black Cultural or African American Cultural Centers in PWIs could be well situated to address these needs. The Center at MCU has proven to be one of the crucial tools for addressing these students' needs. All participants concurred on the power of transformation which exudes from the within the Center onto

its users. The Center, its activities and its staff members serve as a single entity that meets most Black student's needs, from tuition assistance, to books, and attending off campus conferences. Given the opportunity, the Center helps the student-participants to perceiver toward success, in contrast to their non-participating peers.

However, the issue of Black male student dropout rate begins well before they aspire for higher education. Some of my research participants had stopped-out of higher education enrollment prior to coming to MCU. Notably, upon coming to MCU and engaging with the Center, they graduated with undergraduate degrees. And, Max, the only participant that continued his education directly from high school, was on his way to graduate while attributing his persistence and enhancement to the MCU Center. Therefore, the MCU Center was evidently a tool for success to participants of this study. However, groundwork for the educational success of African American males should be laid much earlier because this predicament seems to be cyclical for Blacks and therefore should begin in childhood.

Recommendations

Considering my research findings and my above revelation, my recommendations would involve various facets including parents, elementary schools, middle and high schools, and higher education institutions and their policy makers. ETS Policy Information Center, which is also an arm of the Educational Testing Service, hold symposiums where experts research topics surrounding the health of the national education system. According to ETS "Only 12 percent of Black fourth grade boys are proficient in reading, compared to 38 percent of White boys. Only 12 percent of Black eighth grade, boys are proficient in math, compared to 44, percent of White boys. By

fourth grade, Black students, may be three full years behind their peers" (Prager, 2011). The seriousness of these gaps in the outcomes point to the gaps in opportunities. There are three opportunities areas for consideration of support and intervention: families, PK-12 schools, and higher education**.**

Home and parental intervention. A researcher for the ETC symposium, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, indicated that parents are the first role models that children have, and the home environment is where nurturing and building self-confidence should begin. Research shows that a child's brain development occurs during the child's first five years of a child, therefore this is the most critical time to influence the child's development (Prager, 2011). While this finding is helpful, it should be noted that the research also provided the following counterproductive situations in many Black families:

- 36 percent of Black children live in poverty
- 35 percent of Black children live in households described as "food insecure"
- 38 percent of Black children live in households where parents lack stable employment
- 13 percent of Black children have a mother with less than a high school education
- More than 75 percent of Black children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in "high disadvantage" neighborhoods. (Prager, 2011).

The above statistics are striking and show the hinderances for many well-meaning Black parents. This implies that in order for Black parents to raise their children in ways to close the achievement gap they may need assistance and supportive programs to help

them emerge from poverty as well as educational resources to help them perform their parental duties. In addition, children of these parents need early educational opportunities to prepare them for adulthood.

Educational institutions. All children should be enrolled in kindergarten and elementary school with adequate parental involvement, and policy changes need to occur in order for change to be implemented. An example of such change is evidenced by the Perry preschool study which was conducted from 1962 to 1967. The study was sponsored by HighScope whose mission is "to **close** the opportunity gap through high-quality early childhood education. This longitudinal study involved 128 poor disadvantaged African American children who began the study ages three and four. HighScope reported that:

> The project involved active learning curriculum with teacher and parental participation and has been replicated wildly due to how impactful it proved to be….study found that at age 40, the participants who experienced the preschool program, had fewer teenage pregnancies, were more likely to have graduated from high school, were more likely to hold a job and have higher earnings, committed fewer crimes, owned their own home and car (highscope.org/perry-preschool-project/).

Middle school and high school. During this timeframe, Black male student should be paired with mentors who would challenge and guide them. According to ETS research symposium report, high school years is supposed to be a time students start fulfilling their dreams, but only 52% of Black male in 9th grade graduate black males graduate in four years. In addition, the relentless media interjection of Black peoples'

failures seem to result in most Black male cyclical failure. (www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PIC-PNV19n3.pdf). ETS noted that schools that cater to mainly disadvantaged population offer very few advanced or college prep courses and employ less experienced teachers (www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PIC-PNV19n3.pdf).

Furthermore, the idea of engaging students in a mentoring program has been acclaimed through projects such as True2U, a volunteer mentoring program for eighth grade students in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) in Northeast Ohio. It is a collaborative program where community and corporate citizens volunteer to mentor the students. According to Eric Gordon the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District:

> The 22 schools new to True2U experienced 10.5% increase in students actively choosing their high school from the CMSD portfolio while the district as a whole increased 4.8 percentage points. In addition, for the first time, four True2U buildings experienced 100% of their eighth-grade students make high school choices….Having someone with real-world experiences at their sides has helped our eighth-grade scholars on their journey in selecting their ideal learning environment, positioning them for success in high school and beyond. (neighborhoodleadership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/True2U-Year-3-for-Web.pdf)

The above revelations infer that institutions should refrain from rushing to place students in developmental classes which could stifle student's motivation and eradicate their self-confidence. Rather, through mentoring, students can learn to believe in

themselves. Also, rather than suspend students, they should be assigned some learning tasks to help them introspect on their failings. These could include writing poetries, painting murals, neighborhood gardening, mowing lawns for the elderly, to mention but a few.

In addition, on-site educational advocate programs at these schools would be helpful to provide intervention services for underachieving students such as counseling, tutoring, and referrals to students, to assist them to achieve higher academic potentials. These advocates would work closely with parents, instructors, and mentors to develop and adapt effective individual intervention plans including college tours. Such a structure might help to successfully bridge the discrepancy between students' abilities and their academic achievements, and additionally, include career planning to help students reach their goals

Higher education institutions. Higher Education intervention should involve colleges and universities marketing their PWI's Black or African American Cultural Center programs to middle and high school students. Higher education institutions can achieve this by using collaborative outreach programs, site-visits, and campus tours. Institutions should use this as a recruitment strategy to let prospective students become aware of the programs that are already in place in which they participate upon their arrival at PWI institutions. Current university students' attentions could be retained by improving the Center's programs. For instance, addition of university scholarship programs with awards designated specifically for the Center and through the Center, would draw current and incoming students' interest in the Center.

Institutions should also collaborate with middle and high schools to take College Credit Plus (CCP) courses that would help introduce them to the campus and start building their college credits. These students and their parents should be made aware of Honors Colleges and various scholarships that might be available to them for planning purposes.

For Black male students who are already in higher institutions, management should employ an equal playing field by developing and funding programs that would make the Black students feel included. Drake's description of his constant ordeal securing funding from MCU's Student Government Association for the Center's student organizations and conferences, while the White student organizations' processing went more easily, was very disturbing and points to the inequity that may be systemic in institutions of higher education.

On-campus events should also be a staple to promote Black culture and observe and celebrate Black holidays. Thus, institutions would be constituting more actions and opportunities for inclusivity of diversity. Furthermore, the administration should invest in hiring more African American faculty members. This would also enable students feel that they belong. Also, these students might find it easier to discuss their academic problems with Black faculty whom they feel would relate better to their situation.

Recommendations for MCU Research Institute and Research Site.

Recommendation for MCU administration and stakeholders. In light of the implication of the Black Cultural Center (BCC) in the lives of African American/Black students on the MCU campus, participants reflected on the location of the current Center. Though the research participants appreciate having a Center available to them, they felt

that they are once more relegated to a second-class space due to the location of MCU on-campus Center. Hence many students remain unaware of the Center until close to their graduation. Therefore, MCU should consider the following:

- The Black Cultural Center should be moved to a centralized location, or preferably a centrally-located building on the MCU campus.

- The BCC facility should be designated to host multiple courses in classrooms located within the BCC, thus necessitating students to use the Center. This breaks the phobia that other ethnic groups usually have of entering cultural centers not related to their own race or ethnicities. It would also have the potential to increase interracial interactions among students, faculty and staff.

- The BCC should create programming that offers academic financial support in form of freshman scholarships annually, with open application to all incoming students. This should be open to all students including the majority population, but to Black students in particular.

- In an interview with Dr. Ward, former MCU Center Director, for a previous research study, one of his main challenges as a director was in "helping the University to resist placing marginalized programs in the back burner or cancelling them….The challenge is for the administration to understand that one size does not fit all" (Okwudi, 2013). Therefore, the MCU administration should recognize that it is crucial to maintain the BCC as an active center on its campus.

- My current research found that many Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) established in the 1960s and 1970s, including MCU's Center, are still functioning at that level. Therefore, the MCU administration and stakeholders must recognize and embrace the changes of the 20th through the 21st Centuries by fortifying and enabling its BCC to successfully prepare students for globalization. This should include initiating and presenting up-to-date and timely programming that reflects current issues and concerns.

- MCU's Center must be in tune with technology and meet the students where they are. This should include establishing an African American library and an up-to-date computer lab within the facility for study and scholarly research opportunities. These resources should also be made available to the local community.

- In an interview for an earlier-mentioned previous research study, the director of one of the thriving Black Cultural Centers acknowledged that the founder of their on-campus BCC was visionary in ensuring that their Center was within the Academic Affairs division. He confirmed that this put their BCC in a more secured position from budgetary cuts or downsizing in times of reduction. He inferred that the common assumption is that while student affairs (or student life) contribute to an institution's climate and students' holistic development, its functions are not viewed as essential to the students' first and foremost need of academic growth (Okwudi, 2013). Therefore, MCU's Black Cultural Center

which is currently located in Student Affairs division, should be under the Office of Diversity and Inclusion within the Academic Affairs division which is a more secured position from budgetary cuts or downsizing in time of reduction.

These recommendations would provide African American/Black students with a more visible representational advocate, and guidance towards clarity. It would also add some positive influence on the campus climate (Rankins & Reason, 2005).

Recommendation for MCU Black Cultural Center management. While I commend MCU Center for working serve students and local community with its current budgetary and location constraints, the Center department itself should consider the following recommendations:

- Campus culture seem to change every five years, so the Center must be in tune with changes in use of technology and meet the students where they are, including use of appropriate social media.

- My research showed that there are always challenges (either positive or negative) in moving the Center forward. Therefore, the staff should be prepared to face the challenges and nuances it takes to run a cultural center. This can be achieved through engaging staff in updated training sessions and discussions concerning challenges throughout the school year.

- The BCC staff should advocate to increase the Center's space because this would allow them to host various campus and community organizations' meetings.

Providing this service to campus and outside groups may bring much needed visibility to the BCC on and off the MCU campus

- The BCC staff should engage in a more visible marketing of the Center's resources and its availability to incoming students, currents students, and the local community.

- The BCC staff should design and implement a formal all-encompassing Cooperative Experience (Co-Op) and/or internship program that could be instituted with the local community businesses; this program should be open to all students, but Black students in particular.

- The BCCs contribute to participants' development by functioning as the centralized "go-to" place for the preservation of information on the African American heritage. According to the director of another thriving BCC in the nation, he referred to the Centers as institution's on-site "repositories of the African American experience" (Cooper, 2014). This idea promotes community engagement/enrichment, and education through guided tours of the facilities on some campuses. To accomplish this goal, many BCCs house libraries of historical African American and African heritage resources, for research purposes, as well as history inspiring artworks, mentoring, and tutoring services. These are avenues for diverse groups to learn more about the Black culture and improve interaction. The MCU BCC should develop similar programs in their Center to become a "go-

to" place on the campus for education concerning African American heritage and experience.

- In the earlier mentioned interview for a previous research study, the director of one of the thriving Black Cultural Centers advised other Center directors to "Know your institution's, and department's Vision. Commit to your community. Understand there will be sacrifices, and hard-work. Challenge yourself and keep moving. Work with the leadership and ask what else you can do. Be a positive person and control your emotion. Have a Vision- even if you might not see it to completion; and like Martin Luther King said, "I might not get there with you…"" (Okwudi, 2013). By following these recommendations, the MCU staff would show their initiative to work with the institution's administration in a progressive manner.

These recommendations may provide a pathway for the MCU BCC to become an integral and thriving part of the MCU campus. However, all these recommendations would take activism by students, BCC staff, and faculty to continually validate the existence of the BCC and win MCU's administration's support.

Recommendations for future research. Some responses or comments from research participants related to the second part of sub-question three kindled my interest and would warrant future researching. That section of the question is "*How might the Black Cultural Center or African American Cultural Center facilitate … interracial relations of African American male students?"* In explaining his reason for becoming a Peer Educator, Larry inferred that he probably went out of the norm. He had catered to

both White and Black students in that position, however, he made the statement that, "you very seldom see African Americans with a group of White people, or White students, it's very rare. I mean, most of the time you see Black students with Black students. We stay with our people, and they stay with their own people."

Notably, for over 400 years, African Americans have been experiencing racial discrimination. They have developed various coping methods which has not eradicated the problem. Coping seems to be a way of getting around a situation, however as a Nigerian American, I believe there might be a better way. The Nigerian Igbo proverb (stated here in Igbo language) says, **"*Madu abuọ adighi apụ ara otu oge.*"** This literarily means that "Two people do not stay crazy at the same time." Practically this implies that one of the two "crazy" individuals should regain sanity and strive for a solution to the problem. Therefore, the introduction of Critical Consciousness as a "psychological framework of radical healing for People of Color and Indigenous individuals (POCI) in the United States" (French et.al., 2020), was heartwarming to me. In their discussion on coping versus healing, the psychologists seem to apply the concept of the Igbo proverb stated above. They noted that:

> Healing involves identifying the source of the trauma, engaging in collective resistance against that source, and fostering hope as POCI actively work to prevent recurring trauma for not only themselves but also their communities….On one end of the spectrum, one could get lost in an overwhelming sense of disempowerment. On the other end, only focusing on dreaming for a better future removes oneself from current reality….Racism also has devastating effects on the mental health of

> racialized individuals….Identifying the ways people thrive and become whole in the face of multiple oppressions and inhumanity is central to radical healing…. A sense of psychological strength occurs when POCI have a healthy sense of self and cultural authenticity, while coming together to work toward reducing barriers to their wellness and healing from their hardships (French et.al., 2020).

This idea had been introduced by Ginwright (2010) whose statement is in line with French et. al., 2020 write up. Since the POCI community is more of a collective society rather than individualistic, Ginwright saw this as a community task. According to Ginwright:

> This differential focus on community is key since it allows POCI to understand their experience as part of a "common collective struggle"….In a society where African identity is devalued and demeaned, the radical healing process must consider the ways to rebuild and reclaim racial identity among African American youth…transformative resistance . . . is a healthy psychosocial response to oppression (Ginwright, 2010, p. 63, 122, 124).

Similarly, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) had affirmed the need for African Americans to apply the idea of *double consciousness* (a way of functioning within a dominant culture while maintaining ones home culture). This is the way for African Americans to negotiate their

identities in the U.S. This would result in a healthier and healing existence in the American society.

Therefore, a highly recommended future line of research is an exploration of how the Center can enhance the desire of Black male students to confidently step out of their comfort zones and interact and collaborate with Whites students. Such a study would offer potential insight into engineering the academic success of Black students in a PWI as well as increasing racial integration of White students and students of color. A study with a larger sample of students across multiple cultural center sites might yield transferrable findings. In this vein, I have applied my unbiased third-party subjective perspective as a Nigerian American researcher in my recommendations of policy changes and future research to move us to the next steps.

Final Thoughts

I undertook this research due to my passionate curiosity as a Nigerian-American as to the meaning and influence of the Center on African American male students. Considering the on-going racial divide, I wondered if student's interactions with the Center were helpful in developing much needed coping skills as well as mental and social transformation that would enable them to succeed within a predominantly White higher institution and beyond. The Midwest County University provided me the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity and thereby fill a research gap. The findings suggest that the Center is a gem for Black male students who participate in it. I also found that there is much needed work to be done to enable young Black adults to advance to the higher education level in order to have the opportunity to participate in a PWI on-campus Black or African American Cultural Center, and in fully securing educational opportunities within PWI.

However, “the work” should not be reserved to a single institution or cultural center, because systemic changes are needed.

REFERENCES

50th Anniversary of Desegregation. Retrieved from http://www.sc.edu/desegregation/

Ailworth, E., & Wernau, J. (2020). Wisconsin's Governor Declares State of Emergency Amid Protests. Retrieved from https://www.wsj.com/articles/kenosha-wis-sees-second-night-of-violence-as-unrest-spreads-11598362900

Alexander, M. (2010, 2011). *The new Jim Crow*. New York, NY: The New Press

Alvarez, L. & Buckley, B. (2013, July 13). Zimmerman is acquitted in Trayvon Martin killing. *The New York Times,* A1. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/us/georgezimmerman-verdict-trayvon-martin.html?_r=0.

Anfara, V. A. Jr., & Mertz, N. T. (2015). *Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Baker, C. N. (2008). Under-represented college students and extracurricular involvement: The effects of various student organizations on academic performance. *Social Psychology of Education. 11.* 273-298.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 544-559. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf

Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2013). *Education pays, 2013: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Retrieved from the College Board website: http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report-022714.pdf.

Berlin, I. (2010). *The Making of African America*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Blackmon, D (2008) *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II.* Anchor Book, Random House New York.

Black Cultural Center, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA. Retrieved from https://www.swarthmore.edu/black-cultural-center/our-history-formation-center

Black Cultural Center, Berea College, Berea, KY. Retrieved from https://www.berea.edu/bcc/

Black Cultural Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. Retrieved from https://www.vanderbilt.edu/bcc/facilities/

Black Lives Matter Global Foundation. Retrieved from https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

Boiler Nation: Purdue's Black Cultural Center. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eW2osIsPIM&feature=player_embedded

Bouchard, J. (2017). Transformative Learning. *Research Starters: Education (Online Edition)*. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=f310a074-0a73-40fe-b9b4-937eabd6ad3%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=89164531&db=ers.

Bower, A., & Ketterhagen, A. (2004). Is there inherent mismatch between how black and white students expect to succeed and what colleges expect of them? Journal of Social Issues, (60)1, 718-726.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). Successful *qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Brookfield, S. (2012). Engaging Critical Reflection in Corporate America. In Taylor, E. W., Cranton, P., & Associates. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp 125-136). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brown V. Board: Timeline of School Integration in the U.S.- Trace school integration from 1849 to 2007. "Teaching Tolerance, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center" (2004) Retrieved from, http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-25-spring-2004/feature/brown-v-board-timeline-school-integration-us

Buehler, J.W. (2017), "Racial/Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Lethal Force by US Police, 2010–2014", *American Journal of Public Health* 107(2) 295-297. Retrieved from http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303575.

Chickering's theory of identity development. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chickering%27s_theory_of_identity_development#mw-navigation.

Chickering A. W. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Chi-Ying Chung, R., Bemak, F., Ortiz, D., & Sandoval-Perez, P. (2008). Promoting the mental health of immigrants: A multicultural/social justice perspective. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 86(3), 310-317*. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.

Cleveland State University: Black Studies at a glance. Retrieved from

https://www.csuohio.edu/class/black-studies/black-studies-glance

Cleveland State University: Mims, Howard Alexander. Dedication of the Howard Alexander Mims African American Cultural Center. Retrieved from http://images.ulib.csuohio.edu/cdm/ref/collection/praying/id/1659

Cleveland State University: 50 Years in Review 2004 - 2014. Retrieved from http://library.csuohio.edu/promos/csu50/

Cooper, K. J. (2014). Black culture centers are embracing multiculturalism and intellectual conversation. *Diverse: Issues in higher education,* 31(15), 6-9. doi: 10.1080/14241270701402231.

Cranton, P. (2013) Transformative Learning. In: Mayo P. (eds) Learning with Adults. International Issues in Adult Education. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam

Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. (p. 55)

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design*: *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Cuseo, J. (2009). Student Success, College Quality, and the First-Year Experience: What Really Matters. 22nd International Conference on the First Year Experience. Retrieved from:

http://sc.edu/fye/events/presentation/international/2009/int2009files/49-C.pdf

Davis, P. (2005). The origins of African American culture and its significance in African American student academic success. *Journal of Thought*, 40(1), 43-59.

DuBois, W. E. B. (1903). *The talented tenth. The Negro problem: A series of articles by representative American Negroes of today*. J. Pott & Company, New York.

Daugherty-Brown, Y. N. (2016). An Exploration of African American Male College Students' Perceptions of Factors that Contribute to Their Academic Success. Retrieved from http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive/916. ETD Archive. 916.

de Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Branstetter, C., and Wang, X. (2019). *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (NCES 2019-038). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/.

Dirkx, J. M. (2012). A Jungian approach to transformative learning. In E.W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 116–130). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dirkx, J. M. (2006). Engaging emotions in adult learning: A Jungian perspective on emotion and transformative learning. In E.W. Taylor (Ed.), *Fostering transformative learning in the classroom: challenges and innovations* (pp. 15–26). New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 109. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dweck, C. (2016). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Mindset-Psychology-Carol-S-Dweck/dp/0345472322?asin=0345472322&revisionId=&format=4&depth=1

Elrich, M. (1994). The Stereotype within. *Educational Leadership*, April 12-15.

ETS Policy Notes. (2011). Addressing Achievement Gaps- Positioning Young Black Boys for Educational Success. Vol 19, No. 19. Retrieved from https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PIC-PNV19n3.pdf

Feagin, J. (1991). The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiblack Discrimination in Public Places. *American Sociological Review, 56*(1), 101-116. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095676

French, B. H., Lewis, J. A., Mosley, D., Adames, H., Chavez-Dueñas, N., Chen, G., and Neville, H. A. (2020). Toward a Psychological Framework of Radical Healing in Communities of Color. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 48(1) 14 –46

Funke, D. & Susman, T. (2016) From Ferguson to Baton Rouge: Deaths of black men and women at the hands of police. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-police-deaths-20160707-snap-htmlstory.html#2015

Galletta, A. (2013). Mastering *the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication*. NY: New York University Press.

GI Bill Turns 62 Today (2006). In Military.com. Retrieved from http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,102383,00.html

Ginwright, S. A. (2010). *Black youth rising: Activism and radical healing in urban America*. New

York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gordon, E. T., Gordon, E. W., & Nembhard, J. G. G. (1994). Social Science literature concerning African American men. *Journal of Negro Education,* Vol. 63 (4). 508-531.

Gould, E. (2019). State of Working America, Wages 2018, Wage inequality marches on - and is even threatening data reliability. Retrieved from https://www.epi.org/publication/state-of-american-wages-2018/

Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(1). Article 4

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guiffrida, D. A., (2003) African American student organizations as agents of social integration. *Journal of College Student Development*: Vol. 44 (3). Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.

Hansman, C. A., (2020). Mentor concepts to further leadership development in adult education contexts. In Alston, G. D & Hansman, C. A. (Eds.), *Mentoring, learning, & leadership*. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 167–168*, Fall/Winter 2020.Wiley Periodicals LLC, 9-20.

Harkavy, I., & Hodges, R. A. (2012). Democratic Devolution: How America's Colleges and Universities Can Strengthen their Communities. Progressive Policy Institute (PPI). Retrieved from https://www.progressivepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/10.2012_Harkavy-Hodges_Democratic-Devolution.pdf

Harper, S. R. (2006). Enhancing African American male student outcomes through leadership and active involvement. In M. J. Cuyjet (Ed.), *African American men in college* (pp. 68-94). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Harper, B. E. (2007). The relationship between Black racial identity and academic achievement in urban settings [Special Issue] *Theory into Practice*, 46(3), 230-238.

Harper, S. R. (2010). Peer support for African American male college achievement; beyond internalized racism and the burden of "acting white." In S. R. Harper & F. Harris (Eds.), *College men and masculinities: Theory, research, and implications for practice* (pp. 337- 358). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, S, R. and Harris III, F. (2012). Men of color: A Role for Policymakers in Improving the Status of Black Male Students in U.S. Higher Education. *Penn GSE Center for the Study of Race an equity in Education*. Retrieved from: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537367.pdf

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity expression and development among African American male student leaders. *Journal of Student College Development* 48(6), 127-144.

Hays, D. G., & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. NY: The Guilford Press.

Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time: A translation of Sein and Zeit* (J. Stambaugh, Trans.). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

HighScope Educational Research Foundation. (2021). *Perry School Project* Retrieved from https://highscope.org/perry-preschool-project/

Irving, M. A., & Hudley, C. (2008). Cultural identification and academic achievement among African American males. *Journal of Advanced Academics,* 19, 676–698.

Johnson III, R, G., and Rivera, M.A. (2015) Intersectionality, Stereotypes of African American Men, and Redressing Bias in the Public Affairs Classroom. *Journal of Public Affairs* Education JPAE 21 (4), 511–522. Retrieved from, http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL21-4/06JohnsonRivera082015.pdf

Johnson, L.P. (2017) The Status That Troubled Me: Re-Examining Work with Black Boys Through a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogical Framework. *Urban Education 2017, Vol. 52(5) 561–584* Retrieved from, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0042085915618717

Kafle, N. P. (2011). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method Simplified. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5, 2091-0479.

Kasworm, C.E, Bowles, T. A (2012) Fostering Transformative Learning in Higher Education Settings. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.) *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 388-407). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

King M. L. K. (1963). "I Have A Dream ..." In Speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King at the "March on Washington". Retrieved from https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf

Kuh, G. D., Palmer, M. & Kish, K. (2003). The value of educationally purposeful out of class experiences. In T. L. Skipper & R. Argo (Ed.) *Involvement in campus activities and retention of first year college students* (pp.19-34). Columbus

University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition

Lean On Me. (1989). Retrieved from https://www.imdb.com/video/vi3367017497?ref_=vp_rv_ap_0

LeCompte, M.D. & Schensul, J. J. (2010) *Designing and conducting ethnographic research (Ethnographer's tool kit, Vol. 1)* (2nd Edition). Walnut Creek, CA. Alta Mira.

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation* (2nd edition). San Francisco, C. A.: Josse-Bass Publishing

Merriam, S. B., & Cranton, P. (2015) *A guide to research for educator and trainers of adults* (3rd edition). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing

Merriam, S. B., & Simpson, E. L. (1995). *A guide to research for educator and trainers of adults* (2nd edition). Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Mindset. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved August 2, 2021, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mindset

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Home. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved Oct. 18 2021 from https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/home

Home definition. Retrieved from Merriam-Webster Thesaurus, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/home. Accessed 18 Oct. 2021.

Mezirow, J. (1997). *Transformative learning: Theory to practice. New directions for adult and continuing education,* number 74. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J., Taylor, E., & Associates. (Eds.). (2009). *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Mezirow, J. (2012). Transformative Learning Theory. In Taylor, E. W., Cranton, P., & Associates. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp 125-136). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mingle, J. R. (1981). The opening of White colleges and universities to Black students. In G. E. Thomas (Ed.), *Black students in higher education: Conditions and experiences in the 1970s* (pp. 18-29). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994) *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Museus, S. D. (2008). The Role of Ethnic Student Organizations in Fostering African American and Asian American Students' Cultural Adjustment and Membership at Predominantly White Institutions. *Journal of College Student Development* 49(6), 568-586.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Digest of Education Statistics: Bachelor's degrees conferred to males by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and field of study: 2017-18 and 2018-19.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_322.40.asp?current=yes

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The Condition of Education 2017*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017144.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *Fast facts- Race/ethnicity of college faculty.* Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

Naylor, L.A., Wyatt-Nichol, H., & Brown S.L. (2015) Inequality: Underrepresentation of African American Males in U.S. Higher Education *Journal of Public Affairs Education (JPAE).*

Retrieved from http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL21-4/07Naylor082015.pdf.

Okwudi, E. (2013). [The Place of Africana Studies center in the lives of higher education minority

Black students of African origin]. Unpublished raw data.

Owens-Sabir, M. (2007). The relationship between self-esteem and delinquency: implications for academic achievement among African Americans. (cover story). *Jackson State University Researcher*, 21(3), 59-82.

Oyserman, D., Gant, L., & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African American identity: Pos*sible selves and school persistence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 69, 1216-1232.

Palmer, R., & Gasman, M. (2008). "It takes a village to raise a child": The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a Black college. *Journal of College Student Development, 49,* 51-70.

Patton, L. D. (2006). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of Black student perceptions of Black culture centers. *Journal of College Student Development,* 47(6), 628-646

Petrova, D., Jade Glenister, J., Whiteman, J. (Eds.). (2016). Intersectionality in Promoting Equality [Special section]. *The Equal Rights Review*. *16,* 206-219. Retrieved from http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Equal%20Rights%20Review%20Volume%2016%20Intersectionality.pdf

Pittman, E. (1994). Cultural centers on predominantly White campuses: Campus, cultural, and social comfort equals retention, *Black Issues in Higher Education,* 11(10), 4.

Rankins, S. & Reason, R. (2005) Differing Perceptions: How Students of color and White Students Perceive Campus Climate for Underrepresented Groups. *Journal of College Student Development* (46)1. 43-61

Reid, K. (2013) Understanding the Relationships among Racial Identity, Self-Efficacy, Institutional Integration and Academic Achievement of Black Males Attending Research Universities. *The Journal of Negro Education,* Vol. 82, No. 1

Remembering the Beginning. Retrieved from http://unc.edu/spotlight/remembering-the-beginning/

Reynolds, A. L., & Constantine, G. (2007). Cultural adjustment difficulties and career development of international college students. *Journal of Career Assessment,* 15(3), 338-350 doi: 10.1177/1069072707301218

Richard Greggory Johnson III, R.G., & Rivera, M.A. (2015) Intersectionality, Stereotypes of African American Men, and Redressing Bias in the Public Affairs *Classroom*. Retrieved from http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/index_2015Fall.asp

Rowser, J. F. (1997) Do African American students' perceptions of their needs have implications for retention? Journal of Black Studies, 27(5)718-726

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* (2nd Edition). Los Angeles, CA : SAGE Publications.

Simmons, L. D. (2013). Factors of Persistence for African American Men in a Student Support Organization. *Journal of Negro Education*, 82(1), 62-74 Spencer, M. B., Noll, E., & Stoltzfris, J., & Harpalani, V. (2001). Identity and school adjustment: Revisiting the "acting White" assumption. *Educational Psychologist*, 36, 21-30.

Schuh, John, H., & Jones, Susan R., & Harper, Shaun R., & Associates (2011). *Student services handbook for the profession.* (Fifth edition). Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), The Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strayhom, T. L. (2010). When race and gender collide: Social and cultural capital's influence on the academic achievement of African American and Latino males. *The Review of Higher Education, 33*, 307-332.

Taylor, E. W., Cranton, P., & Associates. (Eds.). (2012*). The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, E. W., & Snyder M. J. (2012). In E. W. Taylor, P. Cranton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 34). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

The History of the Black Student Movement. Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/uncblackstudentmovement/about-bsm/history

The New York Times (2021). *How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html

The State of Young America-economic barriers to the American Dream, the Data Book. A Joint Publication by Dēmos & Young Invincible Retrieved from http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/State-of-Young-America-TheDatabook.pdf

Thelin, J. R. (2004). *A History of American Higher Education*. The John Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, Maryland.

Toldson, I. A. & Lewis, C.W. (2012). Challenge the Status Quo: Academic Success among School-age African American Males. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.cbcfinc.org/oUploadedFiles/CTSQ.pdf

True2U. (2019). *Year 3 in Review Deeper Investment Wider Impact.* Retrieved from https://neighborhoodleadership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/True2U-Year-3-for-Web.pdf

UNCF Public Policy and Government Affairs. (2013). HBCU Graduation Rates. Retrieved from https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/HBCU_Graduation_Rates_4.19.16.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012c). *The Black Alone population in the United States. Table 21. Poverty status of the population by sex and age, for Black Alone and White Alone, not Hispanic: 2011* [Data table]. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/population/race/data/ppl-ba12.html.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The condition of education 2015: Annual earnings of young adults.* Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/ pdf/coe_cba.pdf.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). The Condition of Education 2014 (NCES 2014-083). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cuf.asp

U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). Digest of education statistics: Graduation rates of first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at 4-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity, time to completion, sex, and control of institution: Selected cohort entry years, 1996 through 2006. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_326.10.asp

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1995). Statistical analysis report, data series: NPSAS: 89/90, BPS: 90/92. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs95/95166.pdf

Utsey, S. O., Ponterotto, J. G., Reynolds, A. L., & Cancelli, A. A. (2000). Racial Discrimination, coping, Life Satisfaction, *and Self-Esteem Among African Americans.* Journal of Counseling & Development, 78(1), 72-80.

Whaley, A. L. (2003). Cognitive-cultural model of identity and violence prevention for African American youth. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 129, 101-151.

Whaley, A. L., & Noël, L. (2012). Sociocultural Theories, Academic Achievement, and African American Adolescents in a Multicultural Context: A Review of the Cultural Compatibility Perspective. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(1), 25-38.

Wilkerson, I.W.(2010). *The warmth of other suns*, New York, NY: Random House, Inc.

Wolf-Wendel, L., Twombly, S., Tuttle, K.N., Ward, K. and Gaston-Gayles, J.L. (2004). Reflecting back, looking forward: Civil Rights and student affairs. In Richmond, D. D. (2012), *A case study of two exemplary black cultural centers in higher education.* (Doctoral dissertation), Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/1554

Wyllie, J. (2018). How Are Black Colleges Doing? Better Than You Think, Study Finds. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-Are-Black-Colleges-Doing-/243119

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: design and methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

APPENDIX A

IRB Submission Approval

From: system@cayuse424.com <system@cayuse424.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 10:06 AM
To: Anne M Galletta <a.galletta@csuohio.edu>; Catherine A Hansman <c.hansman@csuohio.edu>; Elizabeth Z Okwudi <e.okwudi@csuohio.edu>
Cc: cayuseirb@csuohio.e.du <cayuseirb@csuohio.e.du>
Subject: IRB-FY2020-174 - Modification approved

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

September 23, 2020

Dear Professor Anne Galletta,

I am writing In response to your study IRB-FY2020-174, *The Place of Black Cultural Centers in the Lives of African American Undergraduate Male Students in Predominantly White Institutions*, as acknowledgement of modifications to previously approved protocol. Please consider this email notice of the Approval for the requested modification to your Cayuse IRB Submission.

Investigator request to modify previously approved CSU IRB Submission #FY2020-74 as follows:

"To date, no students have responded to participate in the study, nor have faculty/staff. We have added as a direct benefit a $50 gift card for students and faculty/staff participants. Our rationale is that it may increase the likelihood we can recruit approximately 8 participants (approximately 4 students and 4 faculty/staff). It also recognizes the time participants are dedicating to be interviewed two times at one hour per interview. A related change is that the # of participants has been moved from 11-50 to 1-10.
There is an added question to the interview protocol that acknowledges the current context in terms of the pandemic as well as the unrest related to racial injustice and inquires about the ways in which the Black Cultural Center has/has not helped them during this time. The addition of one question is included in both the student/alumni and the faculty/staff interview protocols."

.....has been granted."

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL. IF YOU WISH TO CONTACT US, PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL MESSAGE TO cayuseirb@csuohio.edu.

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Karpinski
IRB Analyst
Cleveland State University
Sponsored Programs and Research Services
m.karpinski2@csuohio.edu
216-687-3624

APPENDIX B

Research Site Consent Letter

Cleveland State University
engagedlearning

Black Studies Program

Black Studies Academic Program • African American Cultural Center
IMAGES Radio Forum • Lecture, Arts, & Media Series • Jazz Heritage Orchestra

December 10, 2019

Ms. Elizabeth Okwudi
4286 Tamalga Drive
South Euclid, OH 44121

Dear Ms. Okwudi,

I received your request to use the Black Studies Program as a site for your doctoral research on "The Place of Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) in the Lives of African American Undergraduate Male Students in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)." This letter serves as written consent for you to conduct your research in the Black Studies Program at Cleveland State University.

If you or your dissertation advisor, Dr. Catherine Hansman, need additional information or further written documentation, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is t.l.bynum@csuohio.edu, and my office telephone number is 216-523-7211. I wish you the best with your research endeavors, and I am available to assist you if you need additional support.

All the best,

Thomas L. Bynum, Ph.D.
Director of Black Studies Program
Associate Professor of History

Mailing Address: 1899 East 22nd Street, MC 137 • Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2214
Campus Location: Main Classroom Building, Room 137 • 2121 Euclid Avenue • Cleveland, Ohio
(216) 687-3655 • Fax (216) 687-5446

APPENDIX C

Prospective Research Participant's Invitation

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Elizabeth Okwudi and I am a student in The Urban Education Ph.D. program at Cleveland State University. I am working with Dr. Catherine Hansman and Dr. Galletta, who are members of the College of Education and Human Services faculty and the supervisors for my research project:

The Place of Black Cultural Centers in The Lives of African American Undergraduate Male Students in Predominantly White Institutions.

This study looks at the experience of alumni and current African American undergraduate male students of an urban largely white university campus with a Black or African American Cultural Center. We are also interested in what meaning the Center has meant to you.

Participants will be interviewed and may participate in another follow-up interview. Interviews will take place by Zoom (or by phone when appropriate). Also, with your permission the interviews would be digitally audio recorded for transcription. Your response to the interview questions will be kept confidential.

Each participant in the research will receive a *$50.00gift card* at the end of study.

Please respond to this email and indicate that you agree to participate in the study. *Your email response will be accepted in lieu of your signature on* a detailed "Participants' Informed Consent Letter" which will also be sent to you.

If you have any questions regarding this project please contact me at Elizabeth Okwudi at (216) 687-5589 or via email at e.okwudi@csuohio.edu, or my two faculty advisors as listed. Thank you for your contribution to this research and for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Okwudi

e.okwudi@csuohio.edu,

APPENDIX D

Participants' Informed Consent Letter

The Place of Black Cultural Centers in The Lives of African American Undergraduate Male Students in Predominantly White Institutions

My name is Elizabeth Okwudi, and I am a student in The Urban Education Ph.D. program at Cleveland State University. I am working with Dr. Catherine Hansman and Dr. Galletta, who are members of the College of Education and Human Services faculty and the supervisors for this research project.

What the study is about: This study looks at the experience of African American undergraduate male students in an urban largely white university campus. We are also interested in what meaning the Black Cultural Center has for you.

What participants would be asked to do: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview of about 60 minutes. You may participate in a one-hour follow-up interview as well. The follow-up would occur a month or two following the first interview. Interviews will take place by Zoom or by phone. You will be asked if it's all right to digitally audio record the interviews.

Participation is voluntary: If you agree to participate, you may end an interview at any time. You may choose not to answer a question, if you don't want to respond. Should you be willing to be audio recorded, you may ask that I turn off the digital recorder at any point. The digital recorder belongs to me. Only I have access to the recorder. Should we use Zoom for a virtual interview, I will use the audio recording device that Zoom offers. This device can be turned on or paused at your request. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any point in time with no consequences.

Confidentiality: Your response to the questions will be kept confidential. It will be transcribed by me. The interview will be given a code number. I will keep the master list of names and code numbers on my password protected computer, and Dr. Galletta will

keep the same master list in a locked storage file in her office, Julka Hall, room 378. Only Dr. Galletta and Dr. Hansman and I will see the coded transcripts. This is to ensure your confidentiality. Parts of the interview may be included in a final report, or in related reports during and after the study. It is not known at this time whether a further study would or would not be conducted. Your name will not be attached to the interview or transcripts or any later reports.

Risks of participating: Because the interview involves some questions about racial discrimination, there is a risk of emotional distress that goes beyond daily living. Should you experience emotional distress, you may call the Counseling and Academic Success Clinic here at Cleveland State University. The phone number is 216-687-9325. Also available is the Office for Institutional Equity, which oversees the University's compliance with federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination and harassment. The phone number is 216-687-2223. Also, a risk of participating in this study involves confidentiality. To address this risk, reports on the research will not include identifying information. Reports will use pseudonyms for the participants and the university. Also, to lessen the risk that confidentiality would be breached, consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet in Dr. Galletta's office. Interview transcripts and the digital audio recording files, which will not include your name, will be maintained on a password protected USB in Dr. Galletta's office and on my password protected computer for a minimum of three years.

Benefits of participating: A direct benefit to participating in the study is that you will receive a $50.00 gift card. An indirect benefit may be that you reflect on your own experience, which might lead to a deepening of your own understanding of this experience. Also, you will be adding to the research, and this will help others interested in this topic.

If you have questions: If you have any questions regarding this project and/or would like to receive the final report, please contact me at Elizabeth Okwudi at (216) 687-5589 or via email at e.okwudi@csuohio.edu, or Dr. Anne Galletta at 216-687-4581 (a.galletta@csuohio.edu), or Dr. Hansman at (216) 523-7134, or via email at c.hansman@csuohio.edu

Please read and sign one of the copies of this consent form and keep the other one for your records. Please scan the signed copy and email to me before the interview. If you cannot scan the consent form, please email me and indicate that you have read the consent form and consent to participating in the study and that the email is in lieu of your signature on the consent form.

Thank you for your contribution to this research and for your cooperation and support.

Signing below indicates you are 18 years or older and that you agree to participate.

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

I have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Student Interview Guide/Protocol

Project Description/Question *By: Elizabeth Okwudi*

The purpose of the study is to understand: What meaning do students give to their experience with the Black Cultural Center? My questions will focus on this topic.

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Venue: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interview Questions for: Students Participants

Information on Background and CSU experience

1. Please, tell me a little bit about your student and family life before coming to CSU?

   (Background information about high school and family)

2. Why did you decide on CSU?

3. How has your experience been so far?

- Do you commute or live on campus?
- Are you involved with student clubs, sports, or activities?
- How do you spend your time when you're not in courses (for example work off or on campus?)

4. What have you enjoyed on campus and what have you struggled with?

Experience of Black Cultural Center

5. How did you first learn about the Black Cultural Center (story about what brought them there)?

6. Tell me about the activities you participate in the Black Cultural Center?

7. What does the Center mean to you?

8. How often do you come to the Center?

9. Tell me about the ways that the Center has contributed to your development?

- Academically (helped you in your coursework, connecting with professors)
- Socially (making friends, networking)
- In terms of Black cultural identity development

- In terms of inter-racial interaction with those from different racial and ethnic groups (students, staff, and faculty)
    - Have you struggled in any ways as a result of your participation in the Center?

10. If you were to describe the Center to someone outside of the institution, what might you say?

11. Could you describe for me some important resources that Black Cultural Center provides for you?

12. What else would you like to happen for you at the Center?
13. Could you talk about how your college experience has changed you? (positive change, negative change – stories of what kind of change)

14. How about the Black Cultural Center – has that had any impact on you or changed you in any way? (Get a story if possible)

15. Recently, there has been intense nationwide civic unrest amidst a pandemic. How (if at all) has your experience from the Center helped you through this period

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX F

Staff Participant Interview Guide/Protocol

Project Description/Question *By: Elizabeth Okwudi*

The purpose of the study is to understand: What meaning do students give to their experience with the Black Cultural Center? My questions will focus on this topic.

Time of Interview: _____

Date: _____

Venue: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Interview Questions for: Staff Participant

1. Please tell me about your work at the Center (year began work at the Center, nature of work)
2. How do students first come to the Center? (Probe for whether students had contact with the Center before their admission to the institution, since the Center has run programs for children and youth in the community).
3. Tell me about the activities in which students typically participate in the Black Cultural Center?

4. Could you talk about any ways that the Center has contributed to students' development?
5. Academically (helped them in their coursework, connecting with professors)
6. Socially (making friends, networking)
7. In terms of Black cultural identity development
8. In terms of inter-racial interaction with those from different racial and ethnic groups (students, staff, and faculty)
9. From your experience, describe times in which students may have struggled in some way as a result of their experience of college in a predominantly white institution
10. From your experience, describe times in which students may have struggled in some way as a result of their connection with the Black Cultural Center
11. Could you tell me a story about something that happened for you or for students at the Center, maybe something that was meaningful to you, that will help me understand better what the Center means to students who are connected with it in some way?
12. Recently, there has been intense nationwide civic unrest amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. How (if at all) has the Center adjusted its operation and programs to serve the students at this time.
13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience with the Center that would be helpful to my study?