

BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ON A FIRST YEAR AFFINITY COURSE
FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AT A TWO-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26

“But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

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John Cleo Turner

BLACK IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ON A FIRST YEAR AFFINITY COURSE FOR
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The research for this dissertation is a study of one case example of programs and classes put into place for African American males at community colleges around the United States with a focus on how these programs were successful or not in assisting in the persistence, retention, and graduation of these students. The purpose of using Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory as a framework for exploring the students' experiences in racial 'awakening' was to track the patterns in how these experiences aligned with Cross' concepts.

Jim Scheurich, PhD, Chair

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, the educational attainment of African American males and their experiences in schools, have received considerable attention in the scholarship (Bailey, 2003; Grantham, 2004b; Jackson & Moore, 2006; Moore et al., 2004; Moore et al., 2003). However, critical studies are still needed with regard to why some African American males are successful (educationally as well as socially) despite circumstances that may hinder their success. Such critical studies must provide perspectives on how these men persevere through college to illuminate how their success stories can help other African American males become successful in college as well. As educators in higher education struggle to provide instruction for increasingly diverse populations, college administrators and faculty must take an aggressive role in addressing conditions that result in low academic success among African American students. Vasquez Urias and Wood (2014) noted

... after their first year of enrollment, 11.8% of Black males in two-year colleges will have left without return, by year two, 39.6% will either have left without return or will no longer be enrolled, and 72.4% of Black males leaving college without return or not being enrolled six years later. (p. 1113)

Although the research on two-year colleges is extensive (e.g., Harris & Harper, 2008; Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013), and two-year colleges are a low-cost option for students interested in initiating their college education, empirical studies have not adequately explored the impact of two-year college attendance on African American male students' future educational and social success. Taken as a whole, the accumulated research literature on African American males suggests that "African American males could benefit from appropriate interventions and additional scholarly

inquiry as they relate to improving the academic achievement and retention of African American male students in college. Thus, additional research is needed to examine this group” (Flowers, 2006, p. 270)

In order to understand their educational and social success, critical reflections from African American males must be collected covering their time as students at the community college, but also their experiences before they started as students and their successes after they complete their time at the community college. Critical reflection, “involves deep introspection on one’s core values, assumptions, actions as well as that of others” (Wood et al., 2015, p. 59).

Educators within higher education must have an action-oriented set of processes when it comes to learning about African American males in the community college system. Educators must not only take time to create purposeful programming, curricula, and interventions to assist African American men with academic success, but also take time to learn about their experiences which in turn will help support them, serve them, and help them accomplish their dreams and career ambitions.

Summary of Literature Review

This review begins with a view of the theoretical framework of Black Racial Identity Development, created by William Cross (1971) as the Nigrescence Theory. There have been changes to the Nigrescence Theory over time, particularly when Black Racial Identity Development Model was revisited in 1991 by Cross and expanded in 2001. These changes and expansions provided more identities and had fewer stages to the Black Racial Identity Development Model (Davis, 2013; Ritchey, 2014)

The literature review also provides an overview of four specific sections on important college and university initiatives around the United States that have been put into place to assist with the success of African American males in higher education. The terms “African American” and “Black” will be used interchangeably during this dissertation study. These sections are titled: The African American/Black Male and the Beginning of the Modern Day Community College in the United States; Impact of Societal Pressures/Micro-Aggressions on African American Male Students at Community Colleges; The Role of How Campuses Can Assist with the Success of African American Male Students at Community Colleges; and Outcomes for African American Male Students in Programs and Classes at Community Colleges in the United States that Assist with Persistence, Retention, and Graduation.

African American/Black Male and the Beginning of the Modern Day Community College in the United States looks at the beginning of community college education and how African American men began to find their way to community colleges around the United States. Impact of Societal Pressures/Micro-Aggressions on African American Male Students at Community Colleges takes an in-depth look at the inequities African American males face in college, along with the resilience and persistence needed within themselves to be successful in their college journeys. The Role of How Campuses Can Assist with the Success of African American Male Students at Community Colleges examines how conceptual models and support from higher education professionals who work in programs and with student involvement help African American males’ persistence in college. Finally, Outcomes for African American Male Students in Programs and Classes at Community Colleges in the United States that Assist with

Persistence, Retention, and Graduation discusses student programs and courses around the United States along with a gathering of student reflections on these successful initiatives that are working at colleges and universities for African American male students. These sections of the literature review situate the scholarship on the educational experiences of the African American male students.

Overall, for educators working in student affairs, Black identity development must be included in their learning and understanding to be able to better serve African American students. If student affairs educators and faculty are to better comprehend and address the dilemma of African American male attrition and outcomes disparities, “understanding how persisters and academically successful undergraduate men translate their racial identity statuses into educationally purposeful engagement would be a useful endeavor” (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 136). Until the time when achievement gaps no longer exist in post-secondary education, steps must be taken to address these gaps to help more African American male students to succeed in college. Specifically, “... there should be a conscious effort on the part of community colleges to empower [Black male students] toward success through strategic interventions and relevant engagement” (Ingram & Coaxum, 2018, p. 146). Therefore, it is important for educators in higher education to not only take time to recognize the struggles that African American males have in the community college setting but be able to combat those struggles with meaningful and purposeful initiatives which help these men succeed in college and in their future careers while drawing on their strengths.

Statement of the Problem

It is important to understand the current condition of African American males in higher education. Black men in community colleges, “have significantly lower academic preparation in foreign language, mathematics, and science than their four-year counterparts” (Woods & Williams, 2013, p. 12). According to Strayhorn (2012), “A relatively scant literature exists that estimates the influence of various factors on the retention of African American males at two-year community colleges” (p. 364). When educators understand the backgrounds and experiences of African American men coming into the community college setting, it can help develop program and curricula to help them succeed educationally and socially. Furthermore, “... there were no theoretically based studies focusing on African American male community college students” (Bush & Bush, 2010, p. 40). More evidence, experience, and literature on the successful experiences of African American males at community colleges is needed. In a final analysis, “researchers are working to determine what factors facilitate success for this population and how institutions might remedy the problem of widespread African American male student attrition” (Perrakis, 2008, p. 17).

Purpose of the Study

The guiding purpose of this study was to tell the stories of five Black male student’s experiences before, during, and after they completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. (Furthering Opportunities and Connecting Us to Success) course at Ivy Tech Community College to better illuminate how such a course may influence academic outcomes for African American male students.

This was a case study of one case example of programs and classes put into place for African American males at community colleges around the United States with a focus on how these programs were successful or not in assisting in the persistence, retention, and graduation of these students. The purpose of using Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory as a framework for exploring the students' experiences in racial 'awakening' was to track the patterns in how these experiences aligned with Cross' concepts.

Research Questions

1. How do African American male students at a two-year community college experience the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, a course specifically designed to support Black male students' educational success and identity development as African American males?
2. How do these African American male students perceive the extent to which this experience has supported their potential educational success, potential identity development, and potential success in their future lives?

Summary of Methodology

Using an interpretivist paradigm, this study was conducted with through qualitative phenomenological methodology (Merriam, 2002) to address Black men's experiences as students in an affinity course of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S course at Ivy Tech Community College during the Fall 2012 and Fall 2017 semesters. This study used this course as a representative setting for similar programs across the country.

The students' experiences of and perspectives on their educational experience using the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course as the setting, reflected the experiences of the students. The sample size for the study was five Black/African American male students who registered and completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course for Black/African American males during the Fall 2012 or Fall 2017 semester. There were three semi-structured

interviews per participant, lasting between 45 and 60 minutes each. The interviews focused on the experiences and perceptions of the students who participated in the course, including reflections on their lives before they entered college at Ivy Tech Community College, their reactions to becoming Ivy Tech Community College students and being a student in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, and an overview of their lives in college and beyond after completing the course. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interview data were organized into themes and subthemes.

Significance of the Study

In Howard's (2014) *Black Male(d)*, he discusses how "the call for a more relevant curriculum has been made by other scholars who have asserted that cultural attributes should be incorporated into classroom curriculum" (p. 96). Cuyjet (2006), in *African American Men in College*, states that "since the community colleges are the matriculation venue for large numbers of African American male students, helping them to stay in school must be a priority for those who wish to see more African American men receive post-secondary education" (p. 226). Accordingly, the significance of this study is based on an examination of the experiences of African American males in higher education programs and courses around the U.S. focused on understanding how students' experiences in such programs and courses, created purposefully, can support the educational success of these students. From the The Men of Ujima (MOU) Manhood Development Program on the campus of Riverside City College, to the Student African American Brotherhood, also known as SAAB, at Georgia Southwestern State University, these programs and courses created specifically for African American males attempt to have a positive impact on the future educational and life success of African American

males (Bush et al., 2009; Esters & Mosby, 2007). However, the majority of the research has taken place at four-year institutions of higher learning. Consequently, this study, based on data gathered from interviews with African American male students who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S., a course housed at a community college, is an exploration of how such education programs and courses developed to assist African American males in two-year institutions were experienced and understood by those male students. These experiences gathered through interviews also provide a more in-depth perspective from these students on how intentional courses, such as an African American male affinity section course, can be a foundation for other higher education institutions' thinking in terms of such programming.

Reflective Statement

I completed this study for several reasons. First, I wish to illuminate the experiences of the African American males who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course at Ivy Tech Community College. Secondly, I want to be able to share with higher education institutions how intentionally created programs and courses for African American male students can be researched to show the educational and lived experiences of these students can be used to help other African American male community college students towards their educational and future success. More so, the impetus for this work was to provide a positive narrative to educators on how with a team effort from caring educators who see the promise and passion of African American male college students. These types of programs and courses can lay a foundation for immediate and future success for these students.

My own educational story is one of many trials and triumphs. I graduated from an inner-city Catholic high school in Indianapolis with a 2.2 GPA. The only college acceptance opportunity that I was awarded was to Indiana State University under a conditional academic performance status, a term indicated that I needed to do “well” my first semester. As a young man, I knew this was my chance to change my entire educational trajectory, and I completed my first semester of college with a 3.3 GPA. That one semester of setting a great foundational college GPA changed not only my life as a student, but really, the trajectory of my life as a whole. Now I am an educator with a passion to assist African American male students to know the importance of succeeding in college through not only my words, but in my actions, and through sharing my own personal successful college experience.

In sum, I feel that the students that I had the opportunity to teach in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course deep down, at their very core, are me. As I complete this study, I am working with African American men in Indianapolis who face many of the same inequities, insecurities, and unfortunate circumstances that I have faced in my own life. Pursuing higher education, as these African American male students have chosen to do, was a choice that I made which gave me an opportunity to create and make a better livelihood for myself, but also a better chance at survival in the inequitable world that we live in as African American men. Being able to give back to the field of education as a higher education professional has allowed me to share the knowledge and resources that I have received in education. Beyond this, being able to share my story and experiences with students, particularly African American men, is something that I hope becomes a beacon for such men, as they strive for their dreams through education. Indeed, I feel I

have gained a great deal from sharing my time with these Black/African American men. They have blessed me with the opportunity to teach them, and even taught me many things about living, learning, and surviving as an African American man. I hope that sharing their stories and experiences through this study will shed much perspective on the importance of creating meaningful and purposeful educational opportunities for African American male students in higher education and that our communities will provide educators and African American men with positive reflections on making their success paramount.

Conclusion

Society at large loses when all of its citizens are not able to realize their potential or be assisted in seeing their potential. As more African American men persist to earn degrees, they benefit as individuals, and society benefits from their increased contributions. African American male success is important to society because, practically, each individual brings a different perspective to the table which leads to additional discoveries and solutions to problems. It is not just important for educators to want to take the time to understand the factors involved and the hindrances to African American male college success, but also for educators to want to have a realistic plan and to implement initiatives to support the success of African American male college students.

These realistic plans with strategic goals, actions, and purposes will lead to more knowledge on how to better assist African American male students in community colleges and also how to create proper programs, initiatives, campus services, budgets, and resources to have a longer lasting and intentional effect on African American male

students' college and future success. There needs to not only be a sympathetic approach to these initiatives, but also an emphatic approach from educators to not only see where these students are coming from and what they have to overcome every day to succeed but placing themselves in the struggles and battles alongside them and walking with them through their college journey. By understanding the factors involved in their retention and graduation, strategies can be put in place to enable more African American male students to complete their degrees and certificates.

The guiding purpose of this study was to tell the stories of five Black male student's experiences before, during, and after they have completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course at Ivy Tech Community College to better illuminate how such a course may influence academic outcomes for African American male students. As an African American educator in higher education for 15 years and as an African American male, I can attest that a college degree can have a great impact on the life of an African American male in the U.S. and in the world. It is important to realize that even though we have continued to experience gains in academic achievement for all students, the African American male population continues to lag behind other racial demographic groups of students in higher education. In the end, this study provides perspectives and experiences of African American male students who have worked hard to defy the odds and inequities that they faced in college and in their everyday lives. It shows how their efforts lead to their college success, while illuminating both the constraints and affordances of such a program within a community college setting.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines the scholarship relating to Black male students in context of their admission, persistence, as well as the support they are provided in community colleges. This review is important because "... Black males ...represent a disproportionate population served by community colleges" (Wood & Palmer, 2013, p. 224). Four core areas are covered in this literature review. These areas provide perspectives that relate to the overall success of Black men who attend community colleges. The four core areas include: The African American/Black Male and the Beginning of the Modern Day Community College in the United States; Impact of Societal Pressures/Micro-Aggressions on African American Male Students at Community Colleges; The Role of How Campuses Can Assist with the Success of African American Male Students at Community Colleges; and Outcomes for African American Male Students in Programs and Classes at Community Colleges in the United States that Assist with Persistence, Retention, and Graduation.

The theoretical framework of Cross' (1991) Nigrescence Theory, later renamed Black Identity Development Theory, provides context and reviews the concept of stages and identities that many Black males go through while attending community colleges. Along with addressing the revisions of the Black Identity Development Theory, the missteps of Cross' work are discussed to provide a critical critique of this theory.

The African American/Black Male Student and the Beginning of the Modern-Day Community College in the United States

In *The Community College Story* Vaughan (2006) writes about the creation of the community college, and how it has changed in many different ways to serve the communities of the United States. For example, Vaughan noted,

In addition to offering credit and noncredit courses to a broad constituency, many community colleges serve as a cultural, social, and intellectual hubs in their communities... The community college mission is to provide access to postsecondary educational programs and services that lead to stronger, more vital communities. (pp. 3-4)

To this point, it is important that educators take time to see the beginnings of the community college and how Black male students are a large and vital part of community college history.

Wood and Essien-Wood (2012) noted, “Overwhelmingly, Black males utilize community colleges (public 2-year institutions) as their primary, and often last, opportunity to achieve a postsecondary degree” (p. 985). There are several reasons why Black male college students begin their higher education pursuits at a community college in such high rates. Scholars suggest that the extremely high secondary school dropout rates (Hauser et al., 2004), the increasing rate of GED attainment among Black men (Murnane et al., 2000), and the rate of poor K12 academic preparation and performance (Thompson & Parker, 2007) make community colleges the best hope for many Black male students, regardless of age, who desire a degree in higher education (Bush & Bush, 2005; Ingram & Coaxum, 2018).

Even with many Black males starting their higher education degree pursuits at community colleges, there is very little research on the individual experiences of Black males who attend community colleges. Harris and Harper (2008) contend that

... most of what has been published about male community college students narrowly pertains to how many enroll, earn an associate degree, and transfer. Little emphasis has been placed on demonstrated institutional commitment to the overall success of Black male students. (p. 32)

Wood and Palmer (2013) state that the research that does exist about Black men at community colleges has “focused on personal goals” of Black males within community college, but does not highlight “how these goals can engender academic and social development among Black male community college students” (p. 3). Because of this gap, they suggest

Research is needed that provides a rounded perspective of the personal goals of Black male community college students and discusses how practitioners and other agents within this context could use these goals to facilitate the psychosocial and academic development of Black male students. Having an understanding of the personal goals of Black male community college students and how practitioners could intentionally use them to facilitate students' psychosocial and academic development is critical. (Wood & Palmer, 2013, pp. 3-4)

To this point, among some of the most widespread fallacies about Black male populations is “the deficit perspective that Black males are the cause of their own socioeconomic and educational attainment issues. Such generalizations are blatantly far from the truth” (Ingram & Coaxum, 2018, p. 145). Once these perceptions manifest, they may enter educators’ thought processes, and endorse biases and assumptions of how Black male students at any stage of education will perform educationally. Harper and David (2012) suggested that “While many of these issues are indeed quantifiable and much has been written about them, they work together to convey a dominant message in

academic and public discourse pertaining to Black male students: they don't care about education" (p. 104). Milner (2007) noted,

Whatever the source, some teachers have unsubstantiated, unquestioned, and inaccurate thoughts and beliefs about black male students; put simply, these thoughts can be harmful and quite detrimental . . . Black male students can and do succeed in every type of school across the world. (p. 245)

However, the state of Black males at community colleges is also part of a larger discourse regarding the role of community college within the realm of higher education. A long-standing critique of community colleges is that they act as sidetracking [agents, whether] through placement testing, counseling, and orientation courses, where the process may leave "otherwise promising students who 'aspire'—or otherwise might 'aspire'— to bachelor's and graduate degrees into dead-end occupational programs with no degree outcomes and lowering their education expectations along the way. (Adelman, 2005, p. 109)

Another critique of the community college is that they lack structure that could inhibit the success of Black male students who attend such institutions. Scott-Crayton (2011) noted that "the lack of structure at many community colleges may reinforce inequity, both because the choices they offer are more complicated and because the students they serve may be least equipped to navigate this complexity" (p. 13). Other researchers argue that "lack of structure increases the importance of social know-how or college knowledge, which in turn tends to place already disadvantaged groups (low-income, minority, and first-generation college enrollees) at an even further disadvantage" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 121). These unstructured complexities of the community colleges are not just common but at times can be systemic, where these

knowledge barriers are in place to keep Black male students from persisting successfully through their community college journeys. To this point, a challenge Black males face within community colleges is the emphasis on self-navigating their institutions' degree completion structure from the beginning of their enrollment. Thus, such barriers limit success of Black male students. More structural supports may improve enrollment and attainment of degrees.

A final critique of the community college is that there continues to be evidence that starting at the community college level may not mean a better success-rate in completing higher education degrees for Black male students. For example, Bush and Bush (2005) state that "a review of student performance data provided by the California's Chancellor's Office for Community Colleges indicates that African American men are the lowest-performing sub-group in the percentage of degrees earned, persistence rates and average cumulative grade point average" (p.1).

Impact of Societal Pressures: Micro-Aggressions on African American/Black Male Students at Community Colleges

The racial discrimination that causes psychological and physical harm for African Americans includes a range of covert and subtle acts (Feagin and McKinney, 2005, p. 4) Feagin and McKinney (2005) continue with stating that "...what most whites do not usually see is the array of stress-related psychological, physical, and family costs that are imposed of the targets of racial discrimination----and such racist actions do in fact result in much harm" (p. 3). As White Americans associate racism with White Supremacist groups and hate crimes conducted by the Ku Klux Klan and skinheads, they are unaware how discrimination and bias have taken over an invisible nature that protects them from

realizing their own complicity in the perpetuation of unintentional racism towards people of color. As a result, most White Americans believe that discrimination is on the decline, that racism does not significantly impact the lives of people of color, they are free of personal bias, and that equality will be short achieved (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hudson, 2002; Sue, 2003; Sue, 2004). These thoughts and mindsets of White Americans could not be further from the truth of the heinous and horrendous racist reality that is lived by Black Americans every single day. Social scientists over the years have noted that racism in American society has shifted from overt acts and messages to subtle and implicit expressions (DeVos and Banaji, 2005; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). Some researchers prefer the term racial microaggressions to describe the commonplace, brief, environmental slights, daily verbal, behavioral, and indignities directed toward Black Americans, often unintentionally and automatically (Constantine, 2007; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Whether called microaggressions, microinvalidations, or microinsults, these demeaning gestures towards Black Americans whether intentional or unintentional from White Americans has continued to harm and oppress others still years after the end of slavery and the civil rights movement, keeping racism alive and well in the United States of America.

Community colleges are witnessing higher enrollments of Black males, while at the same time, Black male students are not persisting, transferring from, and/or graduating from community colleges at the same rate as other demographics of students (Bush & Bush, 2010; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001; Harper, 2006a). Since Black men in U.S. society already confront major challenges to success at all levels of education and are subject to lowered expectations by educational professionals,

“researchers are working to determine what factors facilitate success for this population and how institutions might remedy the problem of widespread African American male student attrition” (Perrakis, 2008, p. 19). Research on community college student retention consists of two distinct streams of scholarly inquiry to better understand this issue. According to Strayhorn (2012),

The first focuses on the success of community college students from the point of entry to associate degree attainment. The second stream of scholarship on community college student retention is characterized by studies that focus on the transfer function of two-year community colleges. (p. 363)

Strayhorn elaborates on the multitude of factors that hinder success and lead to the attrition problem among Black males attending community college students:

First, prior research has stressed the importance of academic preparation for postsecondary education, especially among students who are at risk of dropping out of college. Second, African Americans are disproportionately represented among low socioeconomic status ranks. Finally, African American students inherit substantially different forms of cultural capital than that which is usually privileged and acknowledged in schools (e.g., competition, prestige, etc.). A relatively scant literature exists that estimates the influence of various factors on the retention of African American males at two-year community colleges. (p. 359)

There have been other researchers (e.g., Esters & Mosby, 2007; Harris III et al., 2017; Howard, 2014) who have the same perspective on the lack of research pertaining to Black male students who attend community college. For example, Bush and Bush (2010) state,

Furthermore, if one examines the body of literature concerning African American men and the effects of community college education, the scarcity of literature becomes even more apparently opine that upon review of extensive research, there were no theoretically based studies focusing on African American male community college students. (p. 40)

Even with the research that is available on community college students, very little research is available on the experiences of Black males who do persist through community colleges.

Information that is available demonstrates that African American male students face many challenges that can hinder their success at community colleges both at the college and outside of the college. For example, Harper and Wood (2015) wished to understand factors affecting Black male persistence and their academic success at community colleges. Their findings indicated there are four initial concerns when it comes to Black male students' hindrance factors of success at community colleges, which is worth stating at length:

Young Black men overwhelmingly select community college as their primary point of entry into postsecondary education. Given the large proportion of young Black men who attend community college, that these institutions are not facilitating their success is troubling; this situation has significant ramifications for social stratification, economic inequities, and workplace disparities, among other issues. The second concern lies with how the outcomes of young Black men in community college experience are preventable. Institutions committed to curbing the disastrous success rates of these students can do so with guidance and dedication. Community colleges must foster a right-to-succeed philosophy, creating an environment supportive of students' efforts bolstered by policies, structures, training, and an affirming climate. The third concern looks at how Black men are commonly portrayed in the media as gangsters, rapists, womanizers, drug dealers, and thugs. In the community college context, faculty, staff, and peers may hold stigmatized views of Black men that unknowingly communicate that they are not welcome or do not belong on a college campus. The final concern comes with the notion that well-intentioned efforts to support the success of Black men in community college are often plagued by assumptions of applicability. Many college officials assume that research and strategies used for teaching Black men in four-year colleges will be useful in a two-year context. (p. 78)

Overall, it is clear that much more research is needed so that sensible recommendations are placed into practice at community colleges to help with the

persistence, transferring, and completion of college degrees by Black male students. Moreover, these efforts must place the perspectives of Black male students at community colleges at the center of the research, to better understand how their lived experiences will help properly make specific and intentional initiatives to truly give them the support they need to succeed towards their dreams and goals.

The Role of How Campuses Can Assist with the Success of African American/Black Male Students at Community Colleges

Educators who come together can play a significant role in the success of Black male students at community colleges. Scholars, such as Howard (2014), have discussed the manner in which “school curriculum often is disconnected from students’ day-to-day realities and should be more centered on topics, issues, and themes that students are interested in” (p. 96). One way that community colleges can address a culturally relevant curriculum is to first understand the inequities that Black males face within their experiences in and outside of the walls of community colleges such as healthcare disparities, low wage jobs, and access to affordable housing. Relatedly, “academic resilience and personal endurance are identified in the literature as essential to Black student persistence and graduation” (Wilkins, 2006, p. 109). In addition, other factors such as high school grade point average, level of math completed, test scores, and placement scores, as well as social interaction, motivation, and a student’s self-concept are all integral to success (Bush & Bush, 2010).

The variables most predictive of first-time, first-year, Black male persistence in the community college, according to several researchers (e.g., Mason, 1998; Strayhorn, 2012; Wendt, 2014), include those related to environment. Using a hierarchical logistic

regression approach, it was found that “three environmental variables; hours worked per week, supporting others, and stressful life events, were far more predictive than any other variables in the model (e.g., social, academic, background), accounting for 55% of the variable in persistence” (Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012, p. 965) The most predominant factors, however, affecting the success of Black males are “psychological in nature, resulting directly from barriers, negative messages, and stressors in and out of the college environment” (Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012, p. 965). Research has also shown that social integration might serve as a strong predictor of persistence for African American students. Flowers (2006) noted that “African American students who either perceived greater social support or participated in social activities were more likely to persist in college” (p. 283).

Wood et al. (2015) suggest that community colleges can combat these inequities. There are two key stakeholders in this struggle, the faculty who are teaching Black males (and their pedagogy) and, of course, the students themselves. It is important that faculty “... provide learning opportunities that encourage students to engage in critical introspection about what they believe, why they believe it, how they interact with others, and how others interpret them” (Wood et al, 2015, p. 59). Students should “be provided with opportunities to apply the same critical lens to wider society, deconstructing social expectations and values, economic conditions, and structures that systematically disadvantage them” (Wood et al, 2015, p. 59). Overall, Black males in the community college system “within this context of critical reflection, should be encouraged to consider the goals they have to themselves, why they have chosen these goals, and if such

goals will help them changed their lives and communities in ways they desire” (Wood et al, 2015, p. 59).

Wood et al. (2015) purport that it is important to understand the institutional responsibility to help Black males succeed in community colleges. Many factors have been identified which hinder their success at community colleges, such as “lack of financial resources, supporting financial needs of others, and stressful life events” (Wood et al., 2015, pp. 2-3). Other factors may include “racial-gender stereotypes, male gender socialization, and lack of preparation for collegiate work” (Wood et al., 2015, pp. 4-5). Hence, “in order to advance student success, systemic changes may be necessary [and] much of this change begins with (re)specifying the perspectives of college professionals” (Wood et al., 2015, p.11). In a similar vein, numerous scholars have noted the effect of psychological outcomes on community college student success, particularly as it relates to Black males. Such factors can include self-efficacy, or a student’s belief or confidence in their academic abilities (Bates, 2007; Ihekwaba, 2001; Wilkins, 2005). Other studies (e.g., Wood, 2010; 2011a) indicate the importance students place on their perceptions of the worthiness or usefulness of their collegiate endeavors and their abilities to persevere through community college. Furthermore, stereotype threat, the effect of direct and indirect racism and resultant disidentification with education (Steele, 2011) has been shown as salient to minoritized students’ experiences and overall rates of success at community college (Bush, 2004; Bush & Bush, 2010; Foster, 2008; Stevens, 2006; Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012).

Tinto’s (1975) theory of student departure has influenced the vast majority of research on Black male persistence at community colleges. Tinto’s theory posits that

student persistence is a factor of a process in which the social and academic systems of a college interact with students, and lead to a series of academic and non-cognitive behaviors that have implications for the students persisting and being successful. (Ingram & Coaxum, 2018, p. 148)

Consequently, this theory is intended to address the process of departure as it occurs within an institution of higher education, emphasizing the interaction between the students and the environment that the school provides leads to student departure. In this way, Tinto's theory hypothesized that persistence is the result of the match between an individual's motivation and ability with the school's academic and social features.

(Cabrera et al., 1990, p. 19)

These experiences that Black male community college students face can hinder their persistence through college. Further, Tinto (as cited in Reisinger, 2016) argued that

Students enter college with a variety of personal characteristics (such as sex and race), family background (such as parental education achievement and socioeconomic status), academic skills (such as success in high school and standardized tests), and goal commitments (such as highest degree expected). The characteristics and goal commitments then interact with the social and academic systems of the institution. The interactions between the student and these systems take place within the context of the student's world experiences. All of these experiences affect the student's commitment to the institution and ultimately the decision to persist to completion the richer the integration between the social and academic systems with the student's life experiences, the greater the likelihood that the student will continue his or her education. Conversely, the poorer the integration of the student with the institutional systems, the less likely the student is to persist. (pp. 20-21)

This theory is important, as it provides a perspective on how community colleges can start to research how to address the inequities that are faced by Black male community college students. Yet, a critique the researcher of this study has of Tinto's theory of student departure suggests the importance of investigating how Black males are integrating into a college campus culture they are not accustomed to, and that has too

often ignored the external factors that may be reasons for academic failures and could lead to departure.

There is an assumption that

... minority students must separate from their cultural realities and take the responsibility to become incorporated into colleges' academic and social fabric in order to succeed (with little or no concern to address systemic problems within institutions or to the notion that minority students are often able to operate in multiple contexts) become central to the critique of Tinto's student departure model. (Rendon et al., 2000, p. 133)

Tinto's theory of student departure has been widely used in research to address the departure of minoritized and Black college students. However, the critique of the theory is one that should not be denied. Consequently, more research is needed to understand the ways that community college administrators provide inclusion for Black male students into the community college, as well as how they provide assistance and support to address issues that students may face outside of the college environment that may hinder their success.

In relation to Tinto's theory on the success of college students, there are other theoretical frameworks that relate to the success of Black male community college students. For example, the socio-ecological outcomes (SEO) model, which adheres to a three-fold structure, including inputs (background/defining factors and societal factors), socio-ecological domains (non-cognitive, academic, environmental, and campus ethos), and student success outcomes. Related to this model, Harris and Wood (2016) noted "external validating agents can be significant others, family members, friends, and other individuals in students' lives who provide encouragement and the support necessary for students to be successful in college" (p. 44).

Another appropriate framework is the Conceptual Model for African American Male Urban Community College Student Persistence (Mason, 1998). In his study of African American men at a community college, H. P. Mason “took into account background variables, academic variables, and environmental variables” (Kim, 2014, p. 23). This model “addressed a factor specifically related to minority students, the helplessness/hopelessness factor which can be a byproduct of internalized oppression” (Mason, 1998, p. 756). Indeed, Mason’s (1998) model illustrates a direct effect between environmental variables and psychological outcomes, confirming that “what occurs in students’ lives outside of college (in wider society) has a direct effect on their performance in college” (Wood & Essien-Wood, 2012, p. 985). The variables that affect the success of Black males at a community college can come from many places. Thus, it is imperative that these variables are paid close attention by educators at community colleges. The experiences of Black male students must be understood to see where funding, efforts, and initiatives can best be put into place to best serve these students.

Overview for African American/Black Male students in Programs and Classes at Community Colleges in the United States that Assist with Persistence, Retention, and Graduation

While society must never become complacent in advocating for equitable conditions with regard to the persistence of Black males, there is also a need to continue to highlight Black boys and college men who are achieving. It would therefore stand to reason that with such tendencies in Black student achievement,

there should be a conscious effort on the part of community colleges to empower them toward success through strategic interventions and relevant engagement. Summarily, community colleges need to adopt deeper anti-deficit sensibilities coupled with intentional support services toward

inspiring and engendering Black male student success. (Ingram & Coaxum, 2018, p. 146)

In terms of successful initiatives created by community colleges, many of these initiatives have become consistent resources and implemented service that all Black male students are introduced to once they attend particular community colleges. The Men of Ujima (MOU) Manhood Development Program, on the campus of Riverside City College, was birthed as a result of the observed struggles, which threatened the success of African American young men. MOU serves the purpose of preparing African American young men for leadership and success. Success is defined by the student and involves specific areas: spiritual development, mental capacity, cultural awareness, physical prowess, and academics. All candidates are expected to adhere to a new way of living which includes “being accountable to elders and to the other young men in the program, exercise, letting go of vices, and regular communication” (Bush et al., 2009, p. 261). The participants are not given just one mentor to interact with on a monthly basis; rather, they are mentored by an entire council of elders. In addition to the regular meetings, barbeques, and other activities, MOU candidates are required to read Dr. Chancellor William’s book, *The Destruction of Black Civilization*, and Dr. Na’im Akbar’s two books, *Visions of Black Manhood* and *Know Thyself* (Bush et al., 2009). These books are necessary reads as part of the program to provide the participants with knowledge of who they are as African American men and the strength, wisdom, and capabilities they possess to be successful in college and in their future lives.

Another program that highlights the importance of supporting Black male community college students is one that Chandler-Gilbert Community College (CGCC) started as a networking program with the focus on outreach to minoritized male students.

The Male Empowerment Network (MEN) program “works to support the initiative’s objectives of increasing access, promoting retention and improving degree completion rates.

The development of this program is still evolving since its inception four years ago. Currently, the program offers resources and networking opportunities for minority male students to work with peers, faculty, college administrators and community leaders. Furthermore, MEN has a core group of dedicated individuals that are motivated to further develop and enhance the program. Finally, MEN is designed to assist students in accessing resources and developing a connection to the campus, however faculty also have a unique opportunity to connect with students both within the classroom and outside of the classroom. (Wendt, 2014, p. 7).

Student African American Brotherhood, also known as SAAB, was founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe at Georgia Southwestern State University. Esters and Mosby (2007) noted that

The organization attempts to address the academic challenges of Black males and has a record of success in developing and maintaining African American/Hispanic male leadership, discipline and accountability, creating strategies and tools for renewal, revival, and resurrection for a population often written off as lost. (p. 45)

SAAB gives African American men an opportunity to connect with one another on campus in an intentional and purposeful way to allow them to know they are supported in their college success.

Lakeview College is charged by the state of Ohio to serve its diverse community. Lakeview College’s mission statement supports this mandate, stating that the college “creates quality educational opportunities for a diverse community of learners to thrive in an evolving world” (Kim, 2014, p. 126). In fact, two of Lakewood College’s five core themes include access and a positive and diverse college environment. Kim (2014) noted that

The first-place students often go on campus is the Welcome Center. The name itself conveys the college's intention. Students were observed in this area as they approached from front desk to access the services in this area. These services include admissions, registration, cashiering, campus safety, evaluations, financial aid, the testing center, TRIO, access and disabilities services, and Running Start. (p. 126)

In a study of Lakewood, Black male students at the institution were interviewed, and talked about their experiences interacting with offices and their staff on campus.

Imhotep, a student within the study, shared an experience walking into the TRIO office, which serves underserved students with programs, support, and resources through federal grant funds, for the first time:

I can tell you about the feeling. I don't remember exactly which staff members were there, but the feeling was like ... it was just inclusive. Like, Come on in, let's see what we can do to help here, help you to succeed here. (Kim, 2014, p. 128)

Bob, seconded this feeling in discussing his experiences at Lakewood College, noting:

My experiences at [Lakeview College] have been like floating on a cloud with ice cream and candy and everything you can imagine that makes you happy. You're happy. Whatever makes anybody happy, that makes me happy. That's been my experiences. They've been great. The teachers have been great, outstanding. They work with the students, the military. They smile. They say hi. There's no attitude. (Kim, 2014, p. 128)

Bob's experience at Lakewood College is inspiring. It shows how the campus' efforts to make him feel happy and welcomed at the college were appreciated. In this way, Kim's (2014) study suggests the first steps that Black males make on campus are important to their overall continuation at a community college. While the gestures described by Kim were appreciated by the participants, community colleges often fail to address and ignore deeper issues Black male students are facing that may hinder their success at community colleges.

In this way, Bush et al. (2009) discuss how “racism and oppressive conditions only provide a partial explanation for the existence of such programs, initiatives, and organizations” (p. 256) which are created at community colleges. It is important to think about how many of these initiatives have been created with the wrong intentions in mind and have come along with failures and non-success of Black male students. Hence, attention needs to be provided to the programs, classes, and initiatives centered on Black male students at community colleges to make sure they are created for the right reasons, that they are not created to hide an overarching institutional problem that is not being addressed, and that they are evaluated on their methods and practices so that they continue to assist in the success of Black males students.

Programs and classes at community colleges created for Black males must be evaluated for their overall effectiveness. Bryant (2001) discussed how “the transfer rate is lower when Black students are concentrated in particular programs (namely vocational) in predominately white schools” (p. 16). Bryant continued, “grade point average, strength of college goal commitments, number of course credit hours, extent of high school preparation, and perceptions of need for assistance are positively correlated with retention of African American males in community colleges” (p. 17). The efforts of community colleges to create programs, classes, services, and initiatives to support the success of Black males can have positive impact for Black males who are pursuing their degrees at community colleges. They can help with Black male students’ retention and success and also support a sense of hope and pride.

Brooms (2018) stated how “establishing space for Black students to develop connections, positive relationships, and solidarity can increase their sense of belonging

on campus and aid their academic performance” (p. 145). Community colleges taking time to create such programs, classes, services, and initiatives can create a positive and more secure learning environment for Black males which is helpful in many ways. Foremost, these established efforts can provide a safe space for Black males to come together and share their concerns about being college students. They can also provide a means where community colleges can learn more about them and support them in their efforts towards success in college. It is equally important that Black faculty and staff get involved with these efforts to support Black male students as well. Broome noted that “students’ overwhelmingly [believe that] having contact with African American faculty, staff, administrators enhances the campus environment for African American males” (Broome, 2018, p. 144).

The community college is used by many African American male students in order to get a proper start in their higher education journey. Faculty and staff at community colleges can make intentional efforts through programs, services, and initiatives to help Black male students matriculate through college. Along with assisting Black males to matriculate through college, higher education professionals can help introduce these students to Black literature and identity development practices for them to learn more of who they are and where they have come from as Black men in society. These efforts will help them learn more about how they are seen and how they can combat societal microaggressions in order to become more determined and successful in their college endeavors.

In next section, the theoretical framework and rationale for this study are described.

Cross' Model of Psychological Nigrescence

Nigrescence, “the process of becoming Black” (Cross, 1991, p. 157), is a model that depicts the stages of the Negro-to-Black identity transformation experienced by many Black adults during the Black Power period of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America. Cross' (1978) Nigrescence Model is comprised of four stages: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. These stages were enhanced by Cross in a revised model in 1991 and broadened even further in 2001. The following descriptions of the stages of identity refer to Cross' 1991 revised model, which are highlighted in his book *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*. Cross' descriptions provide an in-depth breakdown of the potential feelings, emotions, and thoughts of Black people as they go through this personal journey. The Cross' 1991 revised model was used as the theoretical foundation of this dissertation because it provides rich descriptions of the stages, whereas the most recent revised model of 2001 appeared to reflect more of the theorist's desire to describe certain attitudes associated with the different stages. The 2001 descriptions informed the construction of the attitudinal measure, the Cross Racial Identity Scale (Cross, 1978; 1991; Cross & Vandiver, 2001).

In the first stage the theory, Pre-encounter, Cross (1991) explained that the Black person is in a state of self-hating and deprecation. Self-hating can come in terms of Black persons bashing their own Black leaders, Black culture, even their own Black families for being Black or exhibiting certain (presumed) Black physical or temperamental/personality qualities. A Black person who is deprecating is one who disapproves or may even recommend against, support, or engage in anything that is

connected to Black people such as Black businesses or Black entertainment. Cross also contended that “notions of the colonized mind” or of the “miseducated Negro” come to mind when describing Black people at this initial stage. According to Ellis Cashmore (2004) in the *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic Studies*, the colonized mind refers to when “the colonized group becomes trapped in a caste-like situation. . . [and] it accepts the ‘superior’ ways of life of the colonizing group and tends to view itself [as part of this group] as inferior” (p. 230). Like Cashmore, Cross believed that these groups take on an assimilationist identity, which reflects their beliefs and the feelings that go with them, that they themselves, as well as other Black people can “overcome their ‘self-made’ problems when they begin to learn how to fit into a relatively blameless system“ (Cross, 1991, p. 196).

Oftentimes, this assimilationist quality entails some feelings of anger and frustration targeted toward Black people, as well as some frustration and anger toward Whites who some admit are complicit in discrimination. However, by and large, much of the blame is placed on Black people for not lifting themselves up to White standards, whereas Whites are viewed as occupying dominant positions in the various spheres of life because of their superiority over Blacks and other non-Whites. The assimilationist identity can lead Black people to work toward living a life in which there is acceptance by White people along with opposing such things as multicultural education, which emphasizes the inclusion and incorporation of the contributions of people across the spectrum of difference, and not overwhelmingly attending to Whites’ contributions. Cross (1991) drew from Carter G. Woodson’s *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933) in his reference to the ‘miseducated Negro,’ and thus made reference to the lack of a

knowledge base that informs Black people of the systemic conditions that provides perspective on highly visible differences between the lives of Black people versus White people. According to Cross (1991), “Pre-encounter Blacks cannot help but experience varying degrees of miseducation about the significance of the Black experience” (p. 192).

The next stage is the Encounter stage in which the Black person eventually ‘encounters’ a jarring experience or set of experiences that throws doubt to his or her earlier perspective. He or she is now in a state of emotional, cognitive, and conative instability in his or her life. These Black persons may have taken their livelihood for granted as they had come to feel comfortable in how racism operated. They may have come to accept that they were considered exceptions to the rule or that their treatment as a Black person in the world was deservedly poor. However, in the Encounter stage, they are temporarily shifted from how the world is and how others treat them. This shift may come as a result of many different experiences, whether positive or negative situations, such as being overtly discriminated against because of his or her race or by being warmly accepted into a predominately Black organization or group whose members talk freely about the miseducation.

Other experiences can include a wrongful arrest, a hate-filled encounter with White people like the killing of a Black friend or family member by a White person. As an illustration of Encounter experiences, Cross (1991) alluded to examples of Black people’s different reactions to the April 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Some people “experienced” the event, but did not change (emotionally, socio-politically, and so on) as a result of it. Others who experienced the same event were personally traumatized by it. In this latter group, the void that was created in doubting their prior

world views was simultaneously filled by an increasingly more credible world view called Blackness. The person then becomes receptive or even vulnerable to change. This change starts to make the Black person question who they are and the life they have lived thus far in a White world. The Black person may even start to feel very resistant to the ways of the world so much they can possibly become angry, behave militantly, and they may be motivated to learn immediately how they can disrupt racism.

There are myriad ways to reckon the unsettling feelings and thoughts that are experienced with the Encounter stage. Intentionally, the person who progresses in Black identity development starts to see who he or she is as a Black person and the parts of his or her life that reflected a view of the world as normal. This leads to the next stage, the Immersion-Emersion stage, where the Black person is in an intense and intentional process of change. Not only are Black people in this stage trying to destroy and change their former worldviews, but they also are moving toward an identity that incorporates new knowledge and a quest for stability. Cross (1991) alluded to this stage in two parts: “destroying what one currently is and simultaneously and instantaneously grasping the essence of what one wants to become” (p. 202).

Immersion is the first part of the Immersion-Emersion stage where the Black person has discovered their Blackness through exposure to Black experiences, conversations, and thoughts, or what Cross (1991) called the identity of Intense Black Involvement. The person therefore immerses him or herself into these experiences as “a sea of Blackness” (p. 207) to help resolve the feelings of instability experienced in the prior Encounter stage. This stage is characterized by three facets: rage at White people and culture, guilt for having once been tricked into thinking Negro ideas, and pride in

one's self, people, and culture. This stage might be exhibited when a Black college student gets involved in a historical Black fraternity or sorority, takes classes in Black history, or joins a group or organization on campus that helps him or her learn more about their Black culture and connect with other Black people. In the second phase of this stage, which is termed the Emersion phase, the person starts to take on a new attitude, therefore emerging out of the intense process of the phase. Cross (1991) states that this part of the stage is "an emergence from the emotionality and dead end, either/or, racist, and oversimplified ideologies of the immersion experience where the person regains control of his or her emotions and intellect" (p. 207). The Black person starts to place critical and cognitive thinking into the strength or weaknesses of becoming a 'woke' Black person through their actions.

Cross (1991) proposed that as the Black person transitions from the Immersion-Emersion stage to the final stage of Internalization, he or she focuses more on 'becoming' a Black person and how these experiences have provided new perspective on who he or she is now as a Black person, and into the future. The Internalization stage provides him or her with a deeper focus into becoming a new kind of Black person. Cross (1991) stated that in the Internalization stage "[p]henomenologically... the person perceives himself or herself to be totally changed, with a new world view and a revitalized personality" (p. 211). At this stage, a Black person comes full circle from the naïve Pre-encounter person, through the in-between processes in which the angry person is enraged at the White world, and ultimately, to a place of confidence in his or her newfound personality of Blackness. These Black people leave the Emersion phase of the last stage characterized by being upset about and militant towards the White systems of oppression in their

everyday world to being relatively more calm and determined. They want to provide not only a sense of direction and success for themselves but also share knowledge with others. According to Cross (1991), these Black people are motivated to assist other Black people to overcome oppression mindsets and help them succeed. Consequently, there is a focus now on working to take down the racism they faced firsthand or that others continue to face in their lives. These actions now work to help them and other Black people around them feel a sense of Black pride, love, and Black communalism. Collectively, this embodies the identity of what Cross (1991) referenced as Multiculturalist.

Relevance of Cross' Theory to the College Setting

Sullivan and Esmail (2004) stated that “racial identity is one of the most frequently studied psychological constructs in African Americans” (p. 3). Although much of the research based on these theories is in the psychological literature (Carter, 1991; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Sellers, Rowley, & Chavis, 1997), Cross' (1991) theory has been shown to have relevance to the experiences of Black students in the college environment. For example, Spurgeon and Myers (2008) conducted research among 203 African American male junior and senior college students to determine the relationship among components of Cross's Black Racial Identity Development Model and wellness. These Black male students attended predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). They were asked about internalization of racial identity attitudes, physical self-wellness, and social self-wellness. Studies such as this one show how implementing Black Racial Identity Development Theory can help guide

research to learning more about Black male students and their development through college.

Conceptually, Cross' (1991) model can be applied to Black students in describing how they navigate their way through these campuses, especially in primarily White settings. When Black students with primarily Pre-encounter stage characteristics enter these spaces, they have opportunities to gain (further) knowledge about Black culture, heritage, and history—opportunities that are available to them in many cases, and that can help urge their racial identity development. Immersion into Black culture as a Black college student can open up the eyes of the Assimilationist Type (in the Pre-encounter stage) who may have been minimally or never introduced to these experiences either in formal schooling or in their homes or communities.

Alternatively, one might see that the Black student at an HBCU may navigate the environment better than his or her counterpart who attends a PWI, when the HBCU student is more exposed Black college traditions in those settings. The implication here is that students at either type of college setting can develop racial identity, but that these HBCU settings may provide more positive and inviting opportunities for this growth. I connect this imagery to the 1990s TV show *A Different World*, where young Black people from many different backgrounds and walks of life were introduced to the college culture of an HBCU. The mostly Black cast of actors portrayed students who came from inner city and suburban backgrounds who entered this college environment where they were exposed to instructional and social experiences borne out of the historical greatness of HBCUs.

The campus leadership of a college or university can utilize Cross' (1991) Racial Identity Development Model to better assist in the matriculation, retention, and graduation of the Black students who are at these institutions of higher education. These leaders can distribute assessments at the outset to see where the Black students are and create meaningful learning opportunities based on the results of the survey and to assist these students emotionally, psychologically, and academically. Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) suggest that "students' levels of ethnic [sic] identity development are for students an important factor for student affairs practitioners to recognize when they are considering ways to enhance the educational environment for African American males" (p. 331). It would seem very important for campus leaders take a serious interest in the success of the Black students at their college or university. That is, to make sure the Black students have a campus that is culturally engaging and supportive to their needs of learning about who they are as Black people, can result in impressive numbers of those Black students completing degrees and credentials at their institution.

How Is Cross' Theory Relevant to Black Men?

In terms of Cross' (1991) theory and its relevance to Black men, it is important to look at the full scope of who a Black man is, what he faces in life, and what he aims to achieve by way of career goals, dreams, and desires. Like the Black woman, the Black man has to face numerous micro-aggressions, racial interactions, and demeaning perspectives in their daily life, as well as stereotypes that accompany the image of Black maleness—images of being unintelligent, 'criminal,' lazy, and so forth. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) stated that stereotypes about African American male college students can have an impact at all stages of the education pipeline and be detrimental to the students'

educational aspirations and achievement. These particular circumstances can weigh heavy on the psyche of a Black man to the point where he may doubt his abilities to succeed in the world and in his life. They can also make him not even want to try to make an effort towards a better life for himself. Self-doubt about who he can become and who he is in general can leave a Black man feeling as if he is not good enough to pursue goals such as a college education.

For at least the past 70 years, Black men have been behind Black women on several key educational outcomes including graduating from high school, enrolling in college, and completing college (Butler, 2013; Cash, Morrow, & Hrabosky, 2004; Gasmen & Harper, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008). McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, and Shwed (2011) discuss how Blacks' rates of college completion have steadily risen over time, but at a more rapid pace for women than men. The knowledge of Black women's success over Black men's success can contribute to Black men feeling self-doubt about completing a college degree, if they use gender as a barometer for failure.

Cross (1991) showed that during the beginning Pre-encounter stage, there are feelings of self-hatred linked to Blacks' miseducation. A Black man can feel resistant to even wanting to put effort into making a positive future for himself when he harbors stereotypes about himself and about his purportedly 'innate' potential to succeed. The absorption of this miseducation can be directed at him as both Black *and* male in view of the statistics regarding his chances of success in comparison to White men and Black women (Hensfield, 2012; Miller-Dyce, 2013; Prager, 2011; Roach, 2000). Even negative thoughts of who they, Black men, are as people relative to Black women can create negative mindsets of 'why even try.'

The importance of Cross' (1991) theory with Black men is that it presents a perspective based on race, but may be pertinent to Black men particularly because of their relatively low success rate in college compared to other race/gender groups. Hence, the theory may have relevance to Black men because of the hierarchical significance of race (that is, as a continuum based on presumed superiority and inferiority based on race), in combination with gender, the interaction of the two clandestinely included in the hierarchical structure. In other words, the quality of hierarchy may be absorbed by some in society as inclusive of race *and* other qualities related to aspects of 'lack' that intersect with race, like gender. Consequently, there may also be an assumption that is harbored by Black men that they are on or near the lower rung of the hierarchy by virtue of both race *and* gender.

Facilitating the racial identity development of Black men in college can begin by acknowledging this fictive 'rank' imposed on Black men. Therefore, strategies for helping Black men develop may include targeting Black male stereotypes and by encouraging Black men to interact frequently among themselves in groups to share knowledge, experiences, and insights with other Black men. This may be especially helpful in the Encounter stage where there is a sense of instability and feelings of loss.

With the other stages, from Immersion-Emersion to Internalization, there can be ongoing interactions among Black men, as well as with others, to help further racial identity development. It may allow him to see his thought processes about Black men as personally crippling, and one that he does not need to accept. With greater learning that occurs with this development, he can come to realize that he does not have to conform to stereotypes on what the world says he is. This development will allow him to be more

awakened racially and culturally, and to work with other Black people in the eradication of racial and other forms of oppression. These newly educated Black men can become healed and revitalized and in doing so, help others to experience the stages of Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory.

Why Community College May Present Certain Challenges for Black Men

The community college has several challenges that can work against the success of Black men. Once Black men reach a point of their lives of understanding who they are and what they want to become, the challenge that can come into play is that they will continue to face challenges in all areas of their lives. His sense of belongingness is constantly threatened by racist stereotypes that stigmatize him as unqualified in the community college environment, and as someone who is an undeserving candidate who may pose a security threat to the campus (Cuyjet, 2006; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper, 2009a; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Another challenge for Black men at a community college is that they may believe that they are not 'real' college material, or that if they find the work difficult in this setting, that they will not make it in a more competitive environment.

Wood (2014) states that

Black male students are less inclined to approach faculty fearing that they will be seen as underprepared for college level work, destined for failure in college, and unwelcome in the campus community. Unfortunately, much of this fear is rooted in stereotypical perceptions of Black men in society as being unintelligent and indolent. (p. 157)

Wood and Palmer (2013) note how Black males specifically are more likely to seek out postsecondary opportunities at two-year colleges to facilitate their social and economic mobility. Specifically, 43% of Black men indicate intent to transfer upon

enrollment in the community college to a four-year college (p. 278). For these Black male community college students, the community college in many ways is their first effort to step into postgraduate education and to ‘prove’ to themselves as capable college students.

As the community college works to serve in this capacity, it can allow Black men to feel that they can engage and work towards their college and career dreams. The leaders at these settings can accomplish this goal more successfully with Black men when they can incorporate strategies to help these men feel welcomed and that they belong. One could argue that community colleges are the only logical choice for many Black men when they are not prepared, not just academically, but also financially, emotionally, and socially for a four-year college campus environment. Once such “imposter syndrome” (Edwards, 2019, p. 46) notions are debunked, the campus community can take an interest in learning more about the Black men on their campus as the community also makes efforts to help nurture these students’ racial identity development. When a campus community can take the time to not only know the Black men on their campus as people and in a Black cultural perspective, it opens up the doors for inclusive engagement and learning for everyone on that campus. Wood and Palmer (2016) state

... efforts to redress the persistent and gross disparities between Black men and other groups in postsecondary access, engagement, and success must begin with the question: “What are we doing (or not doing) as a program, department, college, or institution to ensure that Black men have the experiences and opportunity they need to be successful. (p. 9)

How Cross’ Stages Might "Look" for Black Men at Community Colleges

The hiring of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) staff can allow these individuals to come to the community college campuses and provide perspectives on how to better support Black men through their pursuits of a college education. When these

individuals look at their work through the use of Cross' (1991) theory as applied to groups of Black men, it can help these leaders shape curriculum, courses, events, and programming to assist with Black male engagement and connection to the campus. For example, in fostering groups of Black men to move beyond the Pre-Encounter stage of racial identity development, a DEI professional can set up programming for incoming Black men such as a Black Male Summer Bridge program to bring in Black students, faculty, staff, and community members to talk about their racial-oriented perspectives on college life. The DEI professional and staff would convey the importance of sharing the students' knowledge with others, and to achieve a level of confidence in the knowledge. The knowledge of these individuals can provide information, connections, and resources to help students succeed academically. Along with gaining knowledge of who they are racially and culturally in their lives, these conversations can help those with Assimilationist type qualities to challenge their beliefs about a status quo and to point to the racism embedded in a mindset that paints White people as superior to Black and other people of Color. These experiences can help open the eyes of Black male students by showing them how the knowledge they have gained throughout their education is tainted and can influence their sense of hope about their success as Black men. To help Black men through the Encounter stage, these DEI leaders can provide programs and courses that emphasize the emotional turmoil that occurs within this stage of development. Lectures on counseling and introductions to Black male mental health professionals would enhance this particular facet of programming.

The Black male community college student may feel disbelief or shock due to the debunking of the assimilation and miseducation mindset experience that happened in the

Pre-encounter stage. This course can provide not only racial identity development to help introduce them into Black culture, history, and heritage examples that can empower them as Black males, but also other aspects such as character development, financial literacy, and emotional intelligence learning. This course can allow Black men to talk to one another and not only voice their frustrations or life challenges that they may face as Black men, but how they can work through those frustrations by encouraging one another. These activities and conversations among Black males at a community college may help them to take a critical and discerning look at their understanding of their racial background, how and where they received their notions of who they are, and how intentional learning can debunk many notions that are not correct about them as Black men and college students.

Facilitating racial identity development is ultimately focused on promoting Immersion-Emersion stage qualities, which includes high levels of confidence, an appreciation for oppression in all its forms, and an eradication of racial and other intersecting forces of oppression. Consequently, the DEI professional continually aims to create these outcomes as they prepare programs, urge membership in inclusive and justice-forward organizations, and all events that are accessible to students over the course of their time in college. Particularly important are opportunities for Black men to be in organizations that consist primarily of other Black men. As Harper (2006a) noted, “African American males who are actively involved in campus organizations and hold leadership positions in student organizations have better experiences and gain more from college than do their uninvolved same-race male peers” (p. 90). DEI initiatives can provide perspective in many different forms in helping the Black man stay engaged in

college and even provide opportunities for Black men to take the knowledge outside of the campus. Opportunities to put new learned perspectives into practice can prompt the Black male student to become a leader in organizations and also to create events of his own for the other people on campus. Additionally, placing Black male mentors from the community college with Black male students can provide them with people who can help them stay accountable for their academics and lives as students, along with an individual to discuss personal matters. Finally, the DEI professional can promote development of racial identity to the Internalization stage by gathering the perspectives and experiences of Black male graduates as a way of setting up a pipeline of success at the campus. Attending to the stages of racial identity development theory can truly allow community college campus leaders to address the needs of Black men and help them succeed.

Limitations of Cross' Black Identity Development Theory

When higher education institutions have utilized Cross' (1991) model, limitations have risen showing its ineffectiveness in addressing needs of Black male college students. One limitation is in the focus of Cross' and other racial identity theorists on racism to the omission of cultural variables. For example, Jackson (2012) states, "Although there was acknowledgement that experiences not directly connected to racism also had an impact on Black identity development, it was never very clear where and how those cultural or racial influences impacted each stage in the developmental process" (p. 37). Jackson continued:

virtually none of the current Black identity models, while heavily grounded in the notion that racism has had a significant impact on Black identity development, fully explore or acknowledge the impact of the culture of the Black community on Black identity development. (p. 37)

This limitation of how the theory has been incorporated into studies without examining issues of culture, others have pointed to other non-racial issues as having relevance to student experiences and that tend to be omitted in the research. For example, although there have been several studies, such as Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) and Flowers (2004), which look at Black identity development, “when it comes to the effects of in-class and out-of-class involvement and attitudes of actual students, these things sadly in many cases are left out of research” (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 133). While Cross’ (1991) Black identity development theory has been utilized by several different researchers (e.g. Ford & Harris, 1993; Jones & Abes, 2013; Whittaker & Neville, 2010), the actual critical context and qualitative views from the students has far too often been left out of such studies, meaning we have yet to fully understand the impact of utilizing this theory both in research and more so within student programming and academic courses. There can be great benefits of incorporating Cross’ Black identity development theory in programs and courses that specifically cater to the development of Black men. These benefits can range from getting experiences from helping them persist through college, as well as their careers and their everyday lives.

Another limitation within the Black identity development model is related to how it has changed over the years. Recall from earlier that Cross’ original model was developed in 1971, revised again in 1991, and then modified again in 2000. This is important because

while the stages have lessened the number, the identities of what Black people recognize themselves as have increased in numbers. With the changing landscape of research and identities of black people over the years and since the times of the civil rights movement, it’s a question to ask if these changes were truly necessary to make or were they made to appease the masses. (De Larrosa & Butner, 2000, p. 1)

It is an interesting and important question to ask if the theory that is being applied to research analyses is in alignment with the experiences of the researchers' participants. With Cross' theory, which has changed by Cross three times, the use of his 1991 model in this study may reflect experiences that are outdated for the participants involved in the current study.

Conclusion

This literature review provided an overview of how the community college can play a role in the success and the identity development of Black males through different programs, services, and campus opportunities. It also discussed how Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development theory can play a key role in assisting Black male students persist through college. Until a time when achievement gaps no longer exist in post-secondary education, steps must be taken to address the gaps to help more African American male students to succeed in college. It is especially important because there exists growing communities of Black men who desperately need postsecondary credentials and skills to gain employment in the 21st century job market. Ingram and Coaxum (2018) agreed noting, "Community colleges, in turn, stand to benefit from recommendations that support development of campus-based retention strategies for African American men" (p. 40).

Overall, the price of not addressing Black male identity development within the community college looms large. Truly, society loses when all of its citizens are not able to realize their potential or are assisted in seeing what their potential in life can be. Stereotypes and deficit ideas about Black males are factors that cannot be ignored as one

examines the status of the Black male college student. To this point, Ingram and Coaxum (2018) stated:

The sociological implications of such negative stereotypes are that they spill over into arenas such as colleges, to the detriment of the Black male college students. And it should hence come as no surprise that Black male college students are the most likely among students to leave the community college and not persist. (p. 41)

As more African American men earn degrees, they benefit as individuals, and society as a whole benefits from their increased contributions. African American male success is important to society because, practically, each individual brings a different perspective to the table, which leads to additional discoveries and solutions to problems. By understanding the factors involved in their retention and graduation, strategies can be put in place to enable more African American male students to complete their degrees and certificates. Community colleges can play an important role in the shaping and molding of Black male student success by creating meaningful and purposeful programs, classes, groups, and initiatives to better assist these students succeed towards their education dreams. Yet, such supports take attention, preparation, and intuitive thinking to facilitate exactly what types of initiatives should be created to best support the Black male population at each individual institution, and better understanding of how this can be achieved remains under-researched.

Overall, the literature supports the notion that educators must know that the African American male community college student is an individual, and that when served with the best intentions can be a leading force for mentorship and leadership of other African American males, and as an example of success. Hence, this study aims to better understand how Black male students are being served at a specific institution through

various support structures. It aims to understand how a specific institution has cultivated initiatives that not only are a part of initial services when these students come on the campus, but the ways in which Black males are accepted and supported by faculty and staff. This study examines how initiatives to serve Black male students were purposefully created and the ways they were undertaken. Chapter III includes the research design and methods that were utilized in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology and research design used in this study. The first section describes the qualitative methods and an inductive approach to analyzing the data. I then discuss the epistemological framework of qualitative phenomenology which guided how I conducted this study regarding Black male students' experiences as they completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. courses during the fall 2012 and fall 2017 semesters.

Following this, an overview of the sample size and recruitment procedures of the participants is included, along with other data sources I used in the study. This section also provides a summary of the techniques used to ensure rigor and trustworthiness in both the collection and the analyses of the data. Such efforts included member checking, reflective analysis, and peer auditing. The final sections of the chapter provide my perspective on positionality as the researcher and a full description of the research protocol that was utilized to gather the participants' class experiences. The IVYT F.O.C.U.S. (Furthering Opportunities and Connecting Us to Success) course at Ivy Tech Community College – Indianapolis was created to assist African American male students in exploring their culture and racial identities in U.S. society. The course creator's hope was that the African American males who completed the course would discover how their work in college can lead to a pathway of success in work and life for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Qualitative Methods

I utilized a qualitative approach in order to gather the data regarding the experiences of students during the fall 2012 and fall 2017 semesters in F.O.C.U.S. courses at IVYT. Patton (1987) discussed “the beginning point for using qualitative methods is simply an interest in observing and asking questions in real-world setting” (p. 21). There are numerous approaches for analyzing qualitative data (Baskas, 2011; Alase, 2017; Gibbs, 2018). Merriam (2002) goes into detail qualitative researchers’ three main interests in undertaking research study:

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at particular point in time and in a particular context. ... The first characteristic is that researchers strive to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences; that is how do people make sense of the experience? A second characteristic of all forms of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Finally, the product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive. (pp. 4-5)

A phenomenological approach allows the opportunity for the participant’s experiences to be shared and then interpreted by the researcher in a strong, descriptive manner to provide readers an in-depth view of that experience. Because the aims of this study were to bring forth the experiences of Black male students in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. courses and how the course may have shaped their Black racial identity development and college and career success, a qualitative methodological approach seemed to be a good choice for pursuit of this knowledge.

Methodology: Qualitative Phenomenology

As noted earlier, this study was conducted with the use of qualitative phenomenological methodology to address Black men’s experiences as students in an

affinity course --- the IVYT F.O.C.U.S course --- during the fall 2012 and fall 2017 semesters. This dissertation is not an evaluation of that course but rather, an exploration of Black male students' experiences in this educational program. "The primary objective of a phenomenological study is to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon" (Simon & Goes, 2011, p. 1). Phenomenological studies, like this one, are conducted to identify common experiences that occur among individuals in certain groups or settings. Furthermore, a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a structural description of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience (Creswell, 2006). Hence, a phenomenological study focuses on the essence or structure of an experience. As a phenomenologist, I am interested in showing how complex meanings are built out of simple unity of direct experience. In order to understand the essence or structure of an experience, Merriam (2002) argued "the researcher temporarily has to put aside, or 'bracket,' personal attitudes or beliefs about the phenomenon. With belief temporarily suspended, consciousness itself becomes heightened, allowing the researcher to intuit or see the essence of the phenomenon" (p. 7).

Therefore, the students' perspectives of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course provide empirical findings on the meaning they derived from aspects of the course. The next section provides the research questions that were used to guide the study

Research Questions

1. How do African American male students at a two-year community college experience the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, a course specifically

designed to support Black male students' educational success and identity development as African American males?

2. How do these African American male students perceive the extent to which this experience has supported their potential educational success, potential identity development, and potential success in their future lives?

To illuminate the findings, the participants responses, were broken down through a process of iterative coding and analysis that provided evidence of commonalities and differences regarding the experiences of the students who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course (Fernandez, Trenor, Zerda, & Cortes, 2008; Lunsford, 2011, Hesse-Biber et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine a study of one case example of programs and classes put into place for African American males at community colleges around the United States with a focus on how these programs were successful or not in assisting in the persistence, retention, and graduation of these students. The purpose of using Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory as a framework for exploring the students' experiences in racial 'awakening' was to track the patterns in how these experiences aligned with Cross' concepts.

Description of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course

IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course utilizes the main points and objectives of an affinity course curriculum, which is based on a course on instructional design. The course is a contextualized version of a statewide course specifically created as an affinity section for African American male students and implemented into all sections of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course. Affinity spaces attract participants who enthusiastically share their passions. Gee (2004) discusses more about the specifics of a created affinity course:

Each affinity space needs two components: portals and common endeavor. *Portals* are gateways allowing access to the affinity space while *common endeavor* is the passion that captivates participants and may include interests of favorite practices such as movies, music, video games, or social activities. The notion of “affinity spaces”, a particular type of space, is to explain how effective learning takes place. What people have an affinity with (or for) in an affinity space is not first and foremost the other people using the space, but the endeavor or interest around the course and its curriculum being presented to the specific group of students. (pp. 74-75)

Ivy Tech Community College is the

largest singly-accredited statewide community college system in the county and is the #1 provider of higher education for African American students in the State of Indiana at 12% of the total student population with multiple campus locations around the State of Indiana. (U.S. News & World Report, 2019, p. 1)

The IVYT Student Success course serves as the New Student Seminar course for new students who are working toward completing a higher education certificate, technical certificate, or associate degree at Ivy Tech Community College. The goal for any course that is taught as a New Student Seminar is to enhance success in college by assisting students in obtaining skills necessary for their educational, career, and life objectives. Marketing and recruitment for the course was conducted by academic advisors who met with African American male students, with these advisors suggesting the course to take as part of their degree requirements.

With all students in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S course being African American males, some special curriculum add-ins were implemented into the course specifically for these students. African American male speakers were brought in to provide business, political, community, and educational perspectives on how African American males can be successful in the classroom and in their communities. Journal articles with topics related to African American men were shared with the students. The textbook *On Course: Study*

Skills Plus Edition by Downing (2010) was used as the primary textbook for each section of the IVYT Student Success seminar courses.

The fall 2012 and fall 2017 syllabi are provided in Appendix E. These syllabi include detailed information about course content including assignments, readings, and events that provided the foundation for promoting these students' academic, career, and identity development. An e-portfolio project was assigned for both of these courses. The objective of this assignment, in which the men had to complete a series of tasks, was to help them strengthen their progression through college. The tasks were geared to equip them with concrete ways to succeed in college. The five components of the project were: 1) a learning styles inventory and reflection;, 2) the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Apostal, 1991; Crockett & Crawford, 1989; Schurr & Ruble, 1986;), with the addition of a reflection assignments; 3) a self-care plan about what they should be doing to prepare for their rest of their college careers; 4) a list of "Dream Team" contacts that consisted of five people they would want to meet who are doing things that they admire; and 5) a paper on their success and identity goals after they complete college.

A Diversity Project was completed by each student where they answer questions pertaining to how they formed their own personal identities and what it means to be "me." Questions such as: How do I identify? What words describe me? Who are/were the most influential persons in my life? How do I impact my community? Additionally, students worked in pairs or small groups to discover the identities of their classmates and explore similarities and differences. They also explored how they interacted with others who are (or appear) different than themselves and discussed the following topics: What stereotypes am I aware of (re: me and others)? What concerns do we have about people

who are different from us? What am I curious about (re: others' identities)? What worries me about people who are (or appear) different than me? What do I appreciate about people who are different than me? After the group collaboration, the students submitted a 750-1000 word reflection on this identity exploration activity and how diversity impacts communities and individuals. Finally, a F.O.C.U.S. reflection online discussion board section was created for students to leave their personal thoughts about the course and instructor. The reflections provided firsthand experiences of each student regarding how the learning and teaching was affecting them as they were persisting through the course. Throughout the semester, each student had three different times in which they could write about their thoughts on the course, likes and dislikes, and the ways they thought the course could be improved for future students.

Sample Size and Recruitment Procedures

The sample size for the study was five Black/African American men who registered and completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course. Patton (2002) discussed how “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 230). The Black/African American male participants were selected for this particular study in order to get the experiences from a particular demographic of the Ivy Tech student population in a purposive and convenient manner. For this study, there was a strict inclusion and exclusion process that was conducted to identify interview participants. Participants self-identified as Black/African American males, were students at Ivy Tech Community College during the fall 2012 or the fall 2017 semesters, and had completed the IVYT

F.O.C.U.S course as well. This course during the fall 2012 semester, was a 16-week, three credit hour, 48 contact hour course, and during the fall 2017 semester, it was an eight-week, one credit hour, 16-contact hour course. The eligible students were contacted via phone and by email to participate in the study. This contact information was obtained through the Ivy Tech Community College Ivy Advising website that was created by the researcher who also was a former instructor for this course.

Black/African American male students who may have registered but did not complete the course, and participants who did not identify as Black/African American male were excluded from participating in this study. A point of emphasis to reiterate is that the experiences collected as data from these five Black/African American male participants are not the universal experiences of all Black/African American males. The experiences gathered as data refers to and only to these five Black/African American males who completed the IVYT course in either fall 2012 or fall 2017, at Ivy Tech Community College, in Indianapolis, Indiana. The data collected for this study do not essentialize the overall experiences of Black/African American males as other Black/African American males experiences are different than the experiences discussed in this dissertation study. The research data gathered through these interviews only provide the experiences of the five interview participants for this dissertation study.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the primary means of data collection in this study. Each participant was interviewed three times. The data collected from the first interviews were analyzed to build the protocol for the second interviews, and likewise for the third interviews.

Once participants agreed to meet with me, the interview began with a brief explanation of the study and the purpose of the study. The consent form was reviewed with each participant. Participants were given the time to ask questions following this review. Each participant was informed that his participation was voluntary and that he could withdraw from the study at any given moment without penalty. I gathered demographic information from each participant before starting the interview.

Each of the three interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. I kept the information participants shared strictly confidential and secure, where all information forms, transcripts, and audio recordings were kept in locked cabinets. The fact sheets were kept in a separate locked file cabinet from the transcripts. I did not use participants' names, personal data, or information about where they live or work in the write-up of the results. All given names of participants were replaced with an alias to protect confidentiality. Participants were informed that there were no incentives for participating in the study. I explained that by participating in the study, the participants would be contributing to increasing the knowledge base of the community of Black/African American men in colleges and universities.

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenological research is a form of qualitative research that explores a phenomenon of interest that holds a collective meaning for several individuals or participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). In other words, a phenomenological approach illuminates the phenomenon of research interest through personal perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the participants. Additionally, phenomenology allows the researcher to center the study around the lived experiences of

individuals in relation to a phenomenon within a single concept or setting.

Phenomenological researchers tend to choose the interview as a primary means of data collection due to their interest in the meaning of a phenomenon as it is lived by the participants (Bolton & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Englander, 2012).

Interviews allow the participants to express how they saw, felt, and lived the phenomenological experience in their own words. Thus, the data analysis for this study involves embarking on a path going backwards, as participants reflect on and describe their life experiences in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course.

Setting

All interviews took place in private office spaces provided by Ivy Tech Community College staff on the Ivy Tech Community College campus.

Data Analysis

All data for this study were analyzed inductively. This inductive analytic approach included open coding, creating categories, and abstraction, which are described in more detail in the following section. Before beginning the analyses, all audio data were transcribed. I also used notes and memos to account for reflexivity throughout the process of analyzing data. Besides the interview data, I also included discussion board statements made by the participants during the time they took the course. These data were integral to the analyses, particularly in making comparisons between current perspectives and former perspectives.

Analyses

When formulating categories by inductive content analysis, the researcher comes to a decision, through interpretation, as to which things to put in the same category.

Through abstraction, the researcher then formulates a general description of the research topic through generating categories. Each category is named using words that are characteristic to the content. Subcategories with similar events and incidents are grouped together as categories and categories are grouped as main categories (Mayring, 2004; White & Marsh, 2006; Christensen & Lynch, 2020). This abstraction process continues as far as is reasonable and possible (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). I used this strategy to analyze the data. Further, the final set of themes were grounded in Cross' (1991) Nigrescence Theory and Black Identity Development model.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

A goal of any qualitative study is its ability to inspire confidence in its findings among those who read it. To earn such sought after confidence, the researcher must demonstrate sufficient rigor in the research process that leads the results to be determined trustworthy. (Morrow, 2005; Amankwaa, 2016; Morse, 2015) To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of this research study, I employed three validation strategies: member checking, reflective analysis, and peer auditing.

Member Checking

Shenton (2004) described member checking as the “single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study’s credibility” (p. 68). This approach, *written large* in most qualitative studies, involves taking data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2007). Member checking for this dissertation study was conducted by the researcher communicating to the dissertation chair how many potential

participants will be interviewed, where and when the interviews would proceed, and a final discussion on when all the interviews were completed.

Reflective Analysis

Through reflective analysis, the researcher keeps memos and records impressions as they arise, in addition to noting patterns as they begin to emerge in the data being collected (Shenton, 2004). Monitoring reflexivity is described as essential in that it welcomes and explores the subjectivity of the researcher. Reflexivity impacts one's meaning making of the data (Smith, 2006). Krefling (1990) suggests that "once the researcher is aware of these biases, he or she may alter the way in which she collects the data to enhance the credibility of the research" (p. 218). By keeping memos and taking notes of feelings, thoughts, or ideas as they arise, the researcher can become aware of his or her own personal biases and assumptions.

I kept a reflexive journal throughout the study. Here I kept personal reflective notes and impressions about the study, as well as descriptive notes about the interviews, participant behavior and receptivity, and the context.

Peer Auditing

The role of the peer auditor is to serve as a "devils' advocate and keep the researcher honest, in addition to asking hard questions meanings and interpretations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). In doing this, the researcher and the peer auditor discuss and compare interpretations of the data. My dissertation chair served as a peer auditor in this study. He helped me reflect on and interpret the data, as well as discuss the analyses.

Positionality

Because I was a course developer and professor for the participants in this study and because I, too, am a Black/African American male, this may cause some biases in the study. My positionality with this study could be looked at as a limitation to this study and to the overall research that was conducted. On the other hand, my positionality provided insights and understanding that a person of a different racial positionality would not have. However, I self-monitored, through reflectivity, and employed several means to establish trustworthiness and rigor standard to qualitative research.

Conclusion

Chapter III provided a detailed account of the design and processes involved in this study. I used qualitative methods with phenomenological research strategy to respond to the following research questions: 1. How do African American male students at a two-year community college experience the IVYT F.O.C.U.S., a course specifically designed to support Black male students' educational success and identity development as African American males? 2. How do these African American male students perceive the extent to which this experience has supported their potential educational success, potential identity development, and potential success in their future lives? The sample size for the study was five Black/African American males who were registered students in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course for Black/African American males during the fall 2012 or the fall 2017 semesters. I am a Black/African American male and was the professor of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. courses that the participants completed. While I identify similarly, I used my best judgment in obtaining information and presenting the stories of each participant as they viewed their experiences.

As a Black male myself, I wanted to understand Black male community college students' persistence and what underlying mechanisms are at work for these students. It is my hope that increasing our understanding of the experiences of Black male community college students who succeed may inform and enhance the outcomes of those who struggle. Until researchers have explored the topic of persistence among other college students (e.g., community college students), it is difficult for us as educators to close the learning gaps between students who graduate and those who do not. I have recognized the importance of conducting research on this topic for Black male students at community colleges. Learning and overall experience may not be the same for all students, thus an understanding of successful Black community college students' experiences is needed.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study. Data were drawn from the transcripts of three semi-structured interviews involving myself, the researcher, and each of the five participants. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions focused on the reflections of the Black male students for enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College, their lives as students during the time they were enrolled in the F.O.C.U.S. course, and the events that happened after the completion of the course that influenced their academic and career trajectories.

Participants

In order to ensure protection and confidentiality of the interview participants, I replaced all their given names with two-letter initials. Four of the interview participants identified themselves as African American while one participant identified himself as Black/African. The ages of the five participants at the time of the interviews ranged from 26 to 46 years.

Pseudonym	Age	Age of Completing IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course and Fall Semester of Completion	Race	Highest Level of Education to be completed by Dec 2020
TW	26	19/ Fall 2012	African American	Master's
MJ	38	32/ Fall 2012	African American	Associate's
ER	46	43/ Fall 2017	African American	Associate's
BM	26	24/ Fall 2017	African American	None
SM	26	24/ Fall 2017	Black/ African	Associate's

Table I

Table Title: IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Interview Participants' Fact Sheet

TW is a 26-year-old Indianapolis, Indiana native. After completing his basic training with the Army Reserves, TW started at Ivy Tech at the age of 19 in fall 2012. TW is a single father who, after completing his degree at Ivy Tech, continued to be active duty in the Army Reserves. TW graduated with his bachelor's degree in Computer Technology with a minor in Japanese from Ball State University in spring 2018 and later

graduated with his master's degree in Communication Information Science from Ball State University in December 2019.

MJ is a 38-year-old, Gary, Indiana-born Indianapolis, Indiana native. After serving in the United States Army and several successful tours of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, MJ started at Ivy Tech at the age of 32 in fall 2012. TW is married and a father of three and graduated from Ivy Tech in spring 2015 with an associate degree in HVAC.

ER is a 46-year-old Indianapolis, Indiana native. After working for Carrier, a large corporation that produces HVAC equipment, for many years, ER started at Ivy Tech in fall 2017 at the age of 43. ER completed the Entrepreneur Certificate in summer 2019 and completed his associate degree in HVAC at Ivy Tech Community College in spring 2020.

BM is a 26-year-old, Georgia-born Indianapolis, Indiana resident. After moving to Indianapolis in 2015, BM had started at Ivy Tech, stopped for a short while, and then returned in fall 2017. BM is currently working in Indianapolis and returned to college to pursue his college degree at Indiana Wesleyan University in spring 2020.

SM is a 26-year-old, African-born Indianapolis, Indiana resident. After moving to Indianapolis in the summer of 2017, SM enrolled at Ivy Tech for fall 2017. SM completed his associate degree in Mechanical Engineering in spring 2020.

Theoretical Framework

Cross' (1991) Black Racial Identity Development Theory served as the theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the data, and specifically to help me understand the participants' racial identity development. In the first stage of the theory, titled Pre-

encounter, Cross explains that the Black person is in a state of racial-self-hating and deprecation. Cross also contended that “miseducated Negro” (p. 192) or of the “notions of the colonized mind” (p. 193) describe Black people at this initial stage. The next stage of Cross’ (1991) theory is the Encounter stage in which the Black person eventually ‘encounters’ a jarring experience or set of experiences that throws doubt to their earlier stage-level perspectives. At the Encounter stage, Black people experience emotional, cognitive, and conative instability in their lives because of the realization that they have come to feel comfortable in how racism operates. During these experiences of instability, Blacks fluctuate between seeing the world how it is, and how others treat them and other Black people on the one hand, and on the other, the distortions and omissions that have guided them heretofore. These shifts may come as a result of many different experiences, whether positive or negative.

Cross’ (1991) next stage, Immersion-Emersion, is where the Black person has discovered his or her Blackness through exposure to Black experiences, conversations, and thoughts. Cross notes that this stage of identity is one of intense Black involvement. The person immerses him or herself into “a sea of Blackness” (Cross, 1991, p. 203) to help resolve the feelings of instability experienced in the prior Encounter stage. In the second phase of this stage, the Emersion phase, the person starts to take on a new view of the world. In this stage the person starts to place critical and cognitive thinking at the forefront of his or her actions and as a way to assuage unsettling feelings. This emersion is translated into strengths in becoming more ‘woke’ as a Black person, while simultaneously confronting weaknesses, such as adhering to stereotypical ideas about Blackness.

The Internalization stage is achieved when the Black person adopts a deeper focus in understanding and operating in a world that is hostile not only to Black people, but also to various groups of people. The person becomes anew as a Black person. At this stage, a Black person comes full circle from the naïve Pre-encounter stage, through the in-between processes that characterize the Encounter and Immersion-Emersion stages, and ultimately, to a place of confidence in his or her newfound identity as an informed Black person. The focus of the final stage is to work to take down the racism they face firsthand and that others face in their lives. These actions now work to help the person feel a sense of Black pride, love, and Black communalism. The final stage also is what Cross (1991) referenced as the multiculturalist identity. I propose that the development of this multiculturalist identity is important for the Black male's success by assisting them with navigating through life in majority White spaces, and making better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Results

Preview of Themes and Subthemes

1. Life Before College at Ivy Tech and the IVYT FOCUS Course

- a. Wanting More
- b. Academic Inclinations, Aspirations, and Some Self-Doubts
- c. A Search for (Further) Support
- d. Evidence of Prevailing Pre-Encounter Stage Characteristics

2. Life as an Ivy Tech Black Male Student Inside and Outside of the IVYT FOCUS Course

- a. Outside of the Course
- b. Influencing Experiences in the Course
- c. Memorable Assignments and Interactions in the Course

- d. Evidence of Prevailing Encounter/Immersion-Emersion Stage Experiences

3. Life Trajectory Experiences After the IVYT FOCUS Course

- a. Educational Impacts
- b. Bolstering Confidence and a Sense of Belonging
- c. Evidence of Internalization Stage Experiences

Life Before College at Ivy Tech and the IVYT FOCUS Course

Wanting More

The participants discussed their life experiences prior to enrolling at Ivy Tech. The participants saw their attendance at Ivy Tech Community College as a pathway to a better life, both currently and in the future. The Black males in this study saw that the quickest and best route to success was through Ivy Tech.

The participants shared a common desire for more than what they had. All of them expressed wanting an opportunity to have a better life not only for themselves but also for their loved ones and friends. BM said “I was just wanting more. When I say more, I’m talking about opportunities, stability, and ultimate growth.” Starting a degree at Ivy Tech Community College meant having the chance at success, that is, a career, and wealth. MJ viewed Ivy Tech Community College as an opportunity to start on a better path . He stated with “besides being nervous,” he was “excited” as he “was about to be on another adventure.” With his wife as a source of support and motivation attending college herself, MJ noticed how setting an example of working towards completing a college education as a Black man could be beneficial for his children. MJ continued, stating how going to Ivy Tech Community College would open up many opportunities for him and his family

Just had last child, born in 2012. A better career to make more money. And to show my kids “you can still go to college.” My wife was going to college and if one went, the other can go too and let’s have both parents go to college.

ER felt that, even though he was returning to college at an older age, this was an opportunity he had to take. ER discussed how he was “a little nervous...putting all my eggs in one basket” but for him “it was now or never.” ER said to himself “I gotta do something” and when it came to enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College he said “this is a must.” When ER saw “possibly the end coming in three to five years at Carrier” and “getting a severance package or they are going to retire me in three to five years,” he knew the best option for him was “to cut my course at Ivy Tech and get finished.” Starting at Ivy Tech Community College could give him the future that he wanted for himself.

Participants could see a brighter future for themselves by starting a journey toward a college degree at Ivy Tech Community College. The notion of not just wanting “more” but also wanting “better” for their lives, futures, and families gave them a push to start their college degree programs at Ivy Tech Community College. As Black males, even having an opportunity to go to college, to better their lives, became a focus that showed promise to what their future could become.

Academic Inclinations, Aspirations, and Self-Doubt

All participants reported that education was always important to them and that they were academically inclined throughout their lives and prior to attending Ivy Tech Community College. Two participants had experiences at other higher education institutions before enrolling at Ivy Tech. Although motivated to pursue a college degree, ER stated how he “I didn’t do well like I wanted to” at his previous institution. BM

reported similar experiences. Even with his previous non-successful attempt to complete a college degree at a former institution, BM stated that he was “gung-ho” to start his next college journey at Ivy Tech Community College.

During their experiences, ER and MJ had a wife and/or kids prior to enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College. MJ stated that he “wanted to advance my education, but wasn’t too confident about it [but] my wife kinda pushed me and it’s what I needed.”

Supportive family served as important assets in the lives of these men.

MJ formerly served in the United States Army and wanted to be able to utilize his military benefits to attend Ivy Tech Community College. The push from his wife to utilize those benefits before they ran out was a catalyst for MJ’s decision to attend college when he did. It was this encompassing support that allowed him to persist in the midst of a lack of confidence. MJ said:

My wife was the one to convince and inspire me to go back to college. I decided Ivy Tech was the best place to start. It was a planned goal. I kept putting it off. I’m glad she pushed me. It’s something I always wanted to do, just didn’t have the motivation to do it. With my family behind me telling me I can do it, I was prepared. I was prepared to do it.

Similar to MJ, TW shared a similar experience, being a member of the United States military. The strong work ethic he learned from joining the military allowed him to move forward with his educational plans. TW stated,

I thought about attending college at Ivy Tech when I came back from training at the Army Reserves in May 2012. I went to Ivy Tech to try to get through the college decisions. Thought it was an easier transition. College was always a goal.

Even though they aspired to go to college, that aspiration was also met with some hesitancy. Because of some educational experiences that were mixed with racism, TW came to believe that he may not be ready for the rigors of a four-year university. He had

observed in high school how high levels of support were provided for white students, but not for Black students. He stated that he “needed more time to think about the university aspect” and he wanted to make sure he started in a place that gave him the most personal support for succeeding in higher education.

Perseverance in the face of self-doubt and exclusion is a theme that emerged from the interviews. ER, the oldest of the interview participants, shared that before looking into attending college, his employer “was going to move to Monterey, Mexico.” As with other participants, ER had hesitations and fears from his past experiences as he stated that “The one thing I feared the most was math, which kept me at bay. I took math at IUPUI 3 times and each time, I withdrew from the class.” ER knew he needed to start at Ivy Tech Community College in order to be successful. His lack of success in math courses at IUPUI and the fact that the plant he worked at was going to move to Mexico. To this point, ER continued,

I didn't know college algebra. I dropped out and stayed out. When I decided to get back into school, I looked at other schools and core classes. My wife talked me back into “Your job is going to pay for you to go back to school so DO IT!” I turned my focus to Ivy Tech and glad I did. I took my math class and I did okay. When I took math at Ivy Tech, the help was a lot different here than at IUPUI. The teacher helped me to understand it a little better than the teachers at IUPUI. Going to Ivy Tech was a must for me once I got it into my mind that I have to do this. So that fear was in the back of my head a little bit. I was reluctant on what school would be with entering Ivy Tech.

BM failed to complete a year of technical college in Marietta, Georgia. Even though he stated “I wasn't prepared for a lot of the big colleges like IUPUI out here,” he said that “I knew Ivy Tech was the way to go.” Ivy Tech allowed BM to get the help he needed to move beyond the unfortunate occurrences of his other past college experiences.

The personal recollections of the participants illustrate that academic achievements were a priority for the participants before attending Ivy Tech Community College. These Black men, although realizing prior to enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College that the college journey would be difficult, they would not let those prior to college doubts deter them from pursuing an education, which was valued and viewed as necessary. Their high academic expectations of themselves served as motivation for continuing along their academic pathways towards attaining a college degree.

The push towards academic success came from various places for all the participants. All of the participants had not only personal aspirations to succeed but also professional and future aspirations to have a college degree that would lead them to a better life. They gained hope through enrollment in Ivy Tech as their dreams finally started to become realities. For example, ER mentions how “I was reluctant on what school would be with entering Ivy Tech.” He continues with saying how “I hadn’t been in school since my early 20s and now I’m in my 40s, so a lot has changed since then.” He continued “I’m glad I’ve made the decision to come [to attending Ivy Tech Community College].” After almost 20 years of not being in college, ER was very reluctant to try college again, stating how “the fear was in the back of my head a little bit.” Even though he knew that there were jobs that did not require an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, those jobs were scarce for a man in his 40s. Knowing what he wanted for his future, he knew that a college degree would take him to a comfortable and stable place.

SM’s experience before becoming a college student had him wanting better opportunities than he would have had if he would have remained in Africa. SM states how “my work ethic helped me excel in school” and his hard work ethic served as

motivation while he pursued his college degree at Ivy Tech Community College. This was an opportunity SM did not take lightly and as he states “back home, it’s not everyone who gets a job. The employment rate is really low in [country]. It’s either school or work. You don’t get to juggle the two.” SM was grateful for the chance to pursue his college degree and keep himself stable with work. He stated how “enrolling in college and being able to do work at the same time was a ‘wow’ factor.” He continued stating more positive things about his employer and noting that “to learn there was a company actually open to working with my school schedule was exciting.” SM wanted to be able to take advantage of such opportunities for himself in order to succeed and better his own future.

The push to succeed in college for all of the participants came in different forms. They all had individual motivations to be successful in their college journeys at Ivy Tech. Even with all the participants’ journeys starting out differently, each had the inclination to succeed in college which gave them the individual hope needed to push through any adversities or issues during they encountered.

A Search for (Further) Support

The experience of enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College was one of ups and downs for the participants. Coming from different backgrounds and with different mindsets on the college experiences, the participants engaged with the enrollment process with different levels of hesitation and expectations based on their past education and racial experiences. Reflecting on their experiences, the participants discussed the process and how they could have been better prepared for it.

SM discussed how his experiences before enrolling in college led to struggles in adapting to a White system of education. SM discussed how “The American system is

different. The British system is a different European type of system. The majority of world uses kilograms, and the U.S. uses pounds. Most of the world uses kilowatts. You use Fahrenheit.” SM discussed how the tough transition of learning a different education system affected his enrollment process to where he had to take the enrollment test at Ivy Tech Community College called the *Accuplacer*. The new way of learning was a tough transition and he had to adapt quickly, which turned into an opportunity for success for him.

It made the Accuplacer so difficult. Honestly I had to take the Accuplacer twice. The first was a trial one and I realized what I needed to do the second time. I was privileged to be able to understand it the second time and not have to take it again.

Although SM struggled, TW had a more pleasant registration experience. TW complimented the Ivy Tech Community College staff for making the process of enrollment a positive experience for Black male students, stating how the “enrollment and registration process was easy.” TW continued with complimenting Ivy Tech Community College’s enrollment and registration processes stating how “there were a lot of helpful people” at the college. TW discussed how Ivy Tech professionals “were trying to make Ivy Tech more culturally inclusive [and] be more accommodating” to Black college students by having more Black faculty and staff to be able to connect with incoming Black male students. The enrollment experiences of these Black male students, though similar and different in certain ways, provides evidence of the triumphs and struggles of these students. No matter what they may have faced, they all pushed through their individual enrollment situations to come to a place of success toward starting their college journeys at Ivy Tech.

The opportunity to be one of the few Black males they have seen in their lives as college graduates motivated the participants towards success in their college journeys. Even though they knew they would encounter barriers, the process of debunking past thoughts on who they are, and what they could accomplish as Black men in college in a White-raced-based education system, visions of being “the next one,” a Black male college graduate, gave them the focus needed to propel them through their first semester of college at Ivy Tech. Additionally, the opportunity to come together in s a class as like F.O.C.U.S. served as a space for Black engagement and gave the participants hope. Moreover, knowing that they had reached college invigorated many of them to push through whatever obstacles came their way.

BM discovered newfound joy which gave him hope in knowing that during his college experience he “would be one of the two people in my family with a college degree.” Even though at the beginning of his journey he felt the “Black male statistic,” just enrolling in college gave him a determination to defy that stereotype. TW found the F.O.C.U.S. course to be “cool” and “a good opportunity” at Ivy Tech Community College. TW continued how Ivy Tech’s offering of this course was “the administration taking the scope of Black males” into consideration. According to TW “too many Black males are outcasts of the society more than they will admit to, more than Black women.” TW and other participants felt as Black males that society looked at them negatively. Attending college provided an opportunity to debunk the negative thoughts of what they could accomplish. For many of the participants, it was the thought of “being different” from other Black males that they interact with and encounter every day, that gave them the drive to be successful in college. Being different came in terms of knowing that if

they successfully earned a college degree, their lives would be different from several of the Black males they encountered, worked with, and even are related to or friends with. In sum, the opportunity to be Black male students at Ivy Tech Community College gave the participants a sense of hope for their futures, one that they did not have prior to attending.

Evidence of Prevailing Pre-Encounter Stage Characteristics

The up-and-down experiences of the lives of the participants provide perspectives on the struggles that they faced in the beginning stages prior to becoming college students at Ivy Tech. The notion of racial-self-deprecation was evident for the participants, showing that their experiences were in correlation with Cross' (1991) Pre-Encounter stage of his Black Identity Development Theory. MJ was not too sure of his confidence in attending college because of some of his racialized experiences as a Black man in his hometown of Gary, Indiana. MJ stated how he felt he "was stuck in certain jobs" and felt that he was not treated right in these positions because he was Black. Although most did not speak in terms of miseducation or of decolonized attitudes (e.g., "I believe Whites deserve education more than I do," etc.), their doubts about the capacity to succeed in school after high school seemed to be tied to the ways in which they had been treated as Black people, and perhaps even more specifically, as Black men. SM too was nervous about starting his college career because of his experiences with racialized struggles in his life before enrolling in college. He aspired to be an engineer in the United States. SM spoke as how he recalled thinking that for him as an African, to "jump into a four-year university, it felt like it would have been a struggle."

Not discussed in Cross' (1991) model are the indications of stage relevance even as the interview participants may discuss issues of self-doubts or low self-confidence as a result of living in a hostile, racialized society (or societies, as was the case for SW). SM thought that starting at Ivy Tech Community College seemed like a better option than a four-year institution and it was convenient because it was close to home. He expressed that coming from Africa and therefore, going from "a European to American-based education," was a huge concern along with the thought of not being capable of being successful in a White system of education. Ivy Tech Community College was "convenient because it was close to home" and "reasonable" as far as cost of attendance. Going to Ivy Tech gave what SM described as a "wonderful college experience opportunity" that catered to what he needed to complete his planned college goals. Above all, SM took the opportunity to be a Black male college student in the United States very seriously, stating that starting as a college student at Ivy Tech Community College "was one of the greatest achievements I've done." The participants' experiences of feeling a lack of confidence as a result of being Black suggests that they are recalling some initial experiences of being "not good enough" because their race, which is consistent with Cross' Pre-encounter stage in which the person concedes to a status quo in which Whites are presumed to be better fit for prized institutions like college or high-paying occupations. During this stage, people assume a conformist stance about the racial-social order. It would therefore follow that these men had adopted certain notions that they would not succeed in college because they were Black men.

Lastly, all participants who shared their Pre-encounter experiences as Black males pursuing academic goals reported a strong desire to prove not only people in their lives

and the world wrong about the success of Black males in college, but also prove themselves wrong. A few participants recalled significant experiences associated with the desire to do so. That is, they were determined to prove that their lives were not about being the next Black male statistic to fail both in college and in life. For these men, failure was not an option.

For SM, coming to the United States to attend college was like a realized dream. For him, it was as if he had hit it big, bigger than he could have ever imagined attending college in the United States at Ivy Tech Community College, comparing it to “the moment when you win the lottery, that is how I felt.” TW took the opportunity of attending college as “a completed goal” that he had longed to reach. TW stated that “I wouldn’t have known what I would have done with my time” after returning from Army Reserves military training. Ivy Tech Community College gave him the chance to reach a goal and helped him start working towards another: earning a college degree.

Whether a positive or negative experience, the participants showed gumption in pushing through whatever may have come their way in order to become a Black male college student. Enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College proved to be the first of many steps towards success as Black male college students. The participants reported that they had to overcome certain the fears, anxieties, past education and job failures that were tied to negative racialized experiences. These racialized experiences likely contributed to some of their doubts about their success, again reminiscent of the Pre-encounter stage. Moreover, the emotionality that accompanied certain experiences are similar to Cross’ (1991) description of the Encounter stage.

Life Outside and Inside the IVYT FOCUS Course

As described in the last chapter, the participants were students who completed the F.O.C.U.S. course for African American/Black males either in the fall 2012 or fall 2017 semester at Ivy Tech Community College. The course provided not only an introduction to how to be a successful college student but also an opportunity for an immersive experience as Black males learning from a Black male professor. Along with the latter, they also learned about qualities of life and perspectives from faculty, staff, and community members on how to be successful in college and in life as a Black male. These next mentioned experiences provide perspective on the participants' lives outside of the course and how this class experience assisted with college, Black identity, and future success of the students.

Outside of the Course

The initial reaction of being Black male college students for all the participants was one of nervousness and excitement. The weight of what attending college and being successful as a Black male meant to most of the participants weighed on them. The need to be successful was not just for them; it was for their families, friends, and even the country they represented. Being a Black male college student did not just mean completing college for themselves; it meant debunking several misconceptions about Black men's success or lack thereof in college.

MJ knew the opportunity to return to school was bigger than him. Becoming a father once again in 2012, he knew going to college was "a great example for my kids" as he stated, "I'm glad I did it." MJ continued that as he came into the college experience that "even thinking about my siblings, I was the first one to go to college." He said how

the “motivation” in going to college was important in order to show others that if he could do it, others such as his kids, sisters, and other Black males in his life could do it as well.

Coming from an African country, SM recognized the importance of being a successful Black male college student. He stated that when he started at Ivy Tech Community College, it was clear that it “is a diverse college [where] you can find any nationality or race.” SM also noticed the low numbers of Black men on the Ivy Tech Community College campus working towards a degree. He said,

Now, with the statistics, only about 10% students are Black male. When you are a Black man, you fend for your family. I see people more working to make a living then working to earn a living. When you work to earn a living, this is when you can work to invest to when you can retire at 40. I earned my living because I worked hard for it.

SM would put himself in a different crowd of Black men who did not ‘work to live’ but instead ‘lived to work’ by pursuing his college degree at Ivy Tech Community College. SM started to see the big picture early in completing a college degree and how it could lead to a successful future for himself.

The dream of obtaining a college degree started to become a reality with the first introductions to college through enrollment in affinity classes like the F.O.C.U.S. course at Ivy Tech Community College. The participants did not have many examples of seeing Black males with college degrees before enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College themselves; but seeing other Black males with college degrees as faculty and staff members—plus, being introduced to Black male community members with college degrees in different career fields—expanded their possibilities of a life they could have for themselves as future college graduates. The participants who showed they had the

drive to realize their dreams of being college graduates. They all started with big hopes and focus on their dreams, which they began to realize with hard work and perseverance.

Four out of the five participants spoke in detail about the supports they had in place to help them through their college journeys. Coincidentally, BM did not have much support did not continue with his college journey and did not put himself in a position to complete a college credential or degree at any level when he was enrolled as an Ivy Tech Community College student. The participants spoke of their dependence on family, friends, college staff and faculty in order to learn what support systems were already in place. The participants discussed how those supports helped them—or the lack of support hindered them—in their college journeys.

ER had the great support of his wife, who was there for him during the start of his Ivy Tech Community College journey. ER stated how his “wife was my biggest fan” and “she has been my biggest supporter and contributor of success at Ivy Tech.” ER eludes to how his wife provides much verbal support as he discussed how “she caters to my ego. You’re smart... I know you can do it.” “She instilled confidence in me to help me along this journey. It’s been all positive and all good. I love it.”

SM, even though he came to the United States on his own, spoke about the support that he received from multiple places as he began his journey as a Black male student at Ivy Tech Community College. SM talked about how even with his job being supportive, “my family and friends had the most support for me.” He continued discussing how he had “family that was supportive and have friends that have a brotherly bond” and how “they ask ‘how is school going?’ and ‘keep it up!’”

TW not only spoke on the “family, friends support” he had outside of Ivy Tech Community College but also discusses his experiences from receiving support from inside Ivy Tech Community College from Black faculty and staff, “advisors and faculty that helped me drive forward and create more goals to work toward.” These interactions helped TW persist. TW continued on how Ivy Tech staff and faculty to many students, “could be considered financial support... [many] advisors were emotional and financial support.” TW ended with discussing how “Ivy Tech had a progressive Black culture when I was going through.” TW felt that the Black culture at Ivy Tech Community College supported Black male students and was more “progressive [than] Ball State.”

BM’s college journey was one that he wanted to do on his own, stating that “other than God, I didn’t have anyone” when it came to support through college. BM continued that “I wanted to try what is it like if I try to figure everything out and see what happens if I needed help at the right time if need be.” He wanted his college experience to be different from the ones he had before enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College. It is worth mentioning that while BM felt he wanted to persist through the college journey on his own, he was the only participant who did not complete a college credential.

The support systems described by the participants were important to them as they moved through their individual college journeys. These journeys would not have been what they were without those support systems. Their families and friends understood the importance the participants placed on completing their college goals and gave them what they needed.

Influential Experiences in the Course

The F.O.C.U.S. course for African American/Black males gave the participants a place to learn not only about life in college but also about how to properly navigate life in college as a Black male. The course allowed for interactions with faculty, staff, and community members who shared their experiences and gave the participants perspectives on life on being Black males in college and in their everyday lives in America. The participants discussed how such a purposeful, inclusive affinity course can bring perspectives on life that may not be discussed in a traditional first-year college experience course.

MJ commented on hearing from an Indianapolis retired Army veteran and realtor and how his conversation “stood out the most” as “he came in and talked about credit and how you should go about maintaining your credit and how far it can go.”

ER reflected on a Black male class assistant during his experience in the F.O.C.U.S. course who discussed his academic and career journey. ER shared how what the assistant had to say stood out to him as “he had options” because he held multiple college credentials. ER stated how the assistant told the class that “he had about four licenses/certificates he could use so if one didn’t work out, he had another one he could plant his feet with.” ER took the information he heard from that discussion and applied it to his own college journey. ER continued stating “I just recently got done with my ENTR courses, six classes, along with my HVAC classes as I’m looking at making t-shirts and selling those online.”

BM spoke on how,

... one academic advisor from IUPUI spoke to me... She spoke to me about getting 26 credits and transferring to IUPUI and that was a chance.

So “chance” really came to me as a representation for IUPUI and it was motivation towards looking to get into that school.

The motivation that the Black males received from individuals who took time to come and speak with them about their own college journeys and opportunities they would suggest to help them succeed was something the participants took as positive for their own success as college students. The words produced thoughts, visions, and aspirations for these college students, as well as perspectives of how America thought of them as Black males. The participants then knew with the college opportunity they had in front of them, they could truly change the landscape of their futures.

Memorable Assignments and Interactions in the F.O.C.U.S. course

The assignments of the F.O.C.U.S. course for African American/Black males stayed in conjunction with the curriculum of the traditional IVYT Introduction to College/New Student Seminars offered to all students who are looking to complete a credential of any kind at the school. The Black engagement special course additions— e.g., the guest speakers, interactive discussions inclusive to Black male situations and identity development, and F.O.C.U.S. reflections— provided students opportunities to share their perspectives on their experiences in and thoughts about the course. None of the participants remembered the F.O.C.U.S. reflection assignment that was provided to them to record their thoughts on the course. The assignments and memorable interactions discussed in this section reflect some of the participants’ thoughts about the F.O.C.U.S. course for Black males.

SM discussed how the work of the F.O.C.U.S. course connected to his real-life experiences as “it was the type of work that’s like ‘this actually happened.’” SM felt the “material was easy to relate to” as he was glad that he could discuss his experiences of

growing up and living in Africa with other Black male students and how similar the unfortunate plights of life can be for both African-American and African males. SM continued to discuss the debates between the Black males in the class and how powerful they were to him:

I would put it as interactions. We had so much interactions. It was those interactions that hit close to home with those who were in the class. For me coming from a different world, my perspective of them was as an outsider that wasn't judgmental. It was "don't feel like you're the only one being targeted as others in the world feel it." For someone coming into the system, it's not as difficult as many would want to put it. I can remember having a conversation; it was based on privilege. Most were complaining on the privileges they're entitled to when there are here. I remember giving an example on Africa. As much as they want to say it's us against them, I said "Imagine Africa, there are more Blacks than Whites and the same thing that is happening here in the US is happening against Africa." It's situations we'll always encounter, in order to combat, we'll have to do things like complete school, showing people that their things people say we can't do, but we can do it.

TW talked about the joy of connecting with the Black males through interactions in the class as "it was more easy work" and "a lot of the class was older population." TW continued stating "I would remember the bonding and exercises, the discussions, and the people who came through. It was more discussion-based on your thoughts on how do you feel" as Black men in college and in America. TW thought that discussions brought them together to talk about areas of life that Black males face that make it difficult for them to thrive in college and in society.

ER discussed how the conversations in the class helped the Black males in the F.O.C.U.S. course "get to know yourself and how you relate on what you're getting into. If you know yourself, you can get an angle." ER discussed more about how the F.O.C.U.S. course provided the men with direction on how to be a better student:

If I'm a procrastinator, I can't do that now because I have homework. I can't party with my friends, I can't fool with y'all right now, I have this life now. Looking in the mirror and seeing who you are as a person, knowing your characteristics and personality and what you need to change to be successful.

BM talked about the assignments in the F.O.C.U.S. course "were pretty easy."

BM continued discussing how as a Black man, his thinking was challenged. He said, "What stood out the most was the processes of thinking. One of the things I looked forward to was the open dialogue and speak freely and when I say "freely," I mean "FREELY." It felt like college to me and made me feel encouraged to tell my story and really listen to what folks have been through.

BM discussed how watching many of the motivational videos was very inspiring to him during the F.O.C.U.S. course. BM discussed how seeing "Les Brown's videos and seeing people talk about the speakers was good as a mental boost for us. It should be required for every class we take as students." Videos, websites, PowerPoint presentations, and discussions between students created a more comfortable and safe environment for everyone to be able to speak their mind with no holding back on what they felt about a topic or situation as Black men. The instructional methods allowed the participants to discuss their feelings and emotions in a safe and open environment with individuals who may be having the similar experiences. The course allowed for interaction and thinking that provided inspiration to want to not only learn more about themselves but to learn more about the world around them.

Evidence of Prevailing Encounter/Immersion-Emersion Stage Experiences

The information provided by the participants provides a glimpse into the myriad of Encounter/Immersion-Emersion experiences they had through the F.O.C.U.S. course.

The participants found themselves managing different aspects of their lives while striving for educational attainment as Black male students at Ivy Tech Community College. They recognized the ways in which pursuing an education and being Black males affected their lives and their academic process. During his college enrollment process, BM discussed how his enrollment and registration experience was not the most pleasant, stating he felt “treacherous...lost...in a black-hole mindset.” BM stated in his past education experiences that “No one ever talks about that middle/high schools are trash in the transition from high school to college because I feel there’s a barrier there between the school and student individually.” BM felt things would be easier for him if he were White or an athlete enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College, stating how “I feel like my path would be more lined up for success.” BM knew that the assistance to start college was limited for Black males. He said “When I start, I got that... but when am I going to end?” BM’s experiences are reminiscent of Cross’ (1991) Encounter stage because he experienced the emotionality associated with recognizing certain racial identities.

SM found joy in being able to be on his college journey as a Black man, stating how it “made me feel like I was beating a statistic.” The realization that the path of life is different between White and Black males was eye-opening to ER. The content of the F.O.C.U.S. made him dive into his college opportunity with more determination than his previous attempt at completing a college degree at IUPUI. He said,

There was a video about NFL players and money. There was a video about a race between a Black guy and white guy. White guy ran with ease and didn’t have a lot of obstacles, while the Black guy had a tough time. He had hurdles and brick wall and hole in the ground. The Black Guy had to endure a lot to get to the finish line.

Similarly, TW discussed the guest speakers in the F.O.C.U.S course, specifically one speaker who had a “talk about money” and how “he was teaching us stuff we want to hear.” TW continued stating how that particular speakers’ presentation was one that “more Black men want to hear about than just get your education but more about meeting their needs and more there are needs are financial.”

Overall, the data revealed the impact the F.O.C.U.S. course had on the participants’ lives as Black males and on their college success, and in their future lives as they continued their Encounter/Immersion-Emersion journey through college. The intense Black involvement of the F.O.C.U.S. course created a safe place or place of reckoning with past thoughts about life and treatment the participants had endured as Black males prior to becoming students in the course. These Black male students started to become “woke” to opportunities as Black males that they had by completing their college education and how these opportunities could lead to better lives and futures.

Life Trajectory Experiences After the FOCUS Course

Educational Impacts

Their own determination, in addition to support from family, peers, and the institution, made working towards attaining a college degree possible despite the challenges that are associated with being a Black male. Each participant had a unique experience to share. Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that the participants faced multiple demands and stumbling blocks along their trajectories—e.g., the lack of confidence and the lack of examples of Black male college success. For some of the participants, the negative influences in the community and misguidance early in their

college journeys were additional obstacles. The participants took these unfortunate circumstances and turned them into triumphant moments.

ER discussed how the real-life conversations in the F.O.C.U.S. course gave him examples of college success that he could put into practice during his college journey. ER knew that what he learned from the F.O.C.U.S. course “I need to take this stuff and use it”. ER went on to note that this information was useful in his own life as well as for other Black male community college students regarding how they can succeed as well. ER said,

These were all tools and great pieces of advice; you could put them in your hip pocket and take them with you. Not only to use this stuff in school but to use them in everyday life. Whether running your business or family life, you can use this. All that was taught in IVYT F.O.C.U.S. class, you can relate to real life. Now that I have a blueprint on how to put these things to practice, I feel a little bit better. Yeah. It gave me a lot of confidence on how I am to behave going forward. And how to look at obstacles with school now and how to deal with them. It served great.

BM’s thoughts led him to talk about how he wished he would have applied more of the ideas of “networking” and utilizing “necessary resources... [to]...create something out of nothing” during his college experience at Ivy Tech Community College. BM went further to discuss what happened after the F.O.C.U.S. course was completed and what he wished he would have done differently:

I paused immediately after fall 2017 semester. It was work-related. With my job, it would work in my favor to have a degree. I was working as a site director at the time at YMCA. I would smack myself if you ask me now back then because they really would want a degree to move further. It’s kind of a failure I didn’t continue because I would have been further than where I had gotten.

MJ discussed how positive the F.O.C.U.S. course was for him, as well as being around other Black males motivated him to be very successful as a college student at Ivy

Tech Community College. MJ discussed how negative past interactions from his job and life in the military were experiences he used to help succeed through college.

When I kept making the honor roll, I saw it on the elevator and just to know I was doing that well, I just wanted to keep doing it. It let me know that I can do whatever I want to do if I put my mind to it. I'm happy to put on my applications on any job that I have an associate degree. I've even thought about going back to school. Had I never went to Ivy Tech, I feel I'd still be procrastinating about going to school, had my wife not pushed me, so I go a bit more confidence in myself.

TW discussed his future after Ivy Tech Community College. TW was thankful that Ivy Tech Community College allowed him to transfer his credits over to Ball State University after having his daughter in 2014. TW experienced success there by switching his "major from marketing to computer technology and minor in Japanese in spring 2018." TW continued successfully with his education at Ball State University by even graduating with his degree in Information Communication Science in fall 2019. SM talked about how the F.O.C.U.S. course gave him the confidence to succeed in college. He said, "I wanted to be part of those that say, they can do it." SM talked more about how that success allowed him to see that he could break the negative stereotypes that the world often places on Black males in college.

The fact that I came out of that class grounded knowing what the world expects of me and I'm not going to give you the satisfaction of "I told you so and this is how they all behave." I was excited. The final end game is graduating and I'm so glad to be graduating next May 2020. I didn't want to be part of a statistic: "we told you this type of human being would not finish college or they drop out because they find it challenging." I wanted to be part of "whatever economy or place you come from, you can still make something of yourself." I mostly came from a place of people of color. I came here with a mindset of "this is the type of education I want." I brought in my culture to get my education. It made me not see color. It made me see any other student like I am. It helped me not get easily intimidated.

Bolstering Confidence and a Sense of Belonging

ER shared how “perseverance” and “being dedicated to what I’m doing” are important for college success. ER detailed how a person should want success in college for themselves bad enough so that when it gets difficult, they will not be quick to abandon their dreams. ER also discussed how the education journey at Ivy Tech Community College can be significant for Black male college students, but they have to want it bad enough and not take the opportunity for granted. He said,

Having a balance between my school life and my life outside, whether it’s my social life or life with my wife. I want them to understand that I’m in school trying to do something to help my life and family and that’s what I’ve been trying to embrace since I left. I’m more dedicated and focused. I’m relentless and trying to persevere. I’m not scared no more. I’m not. He was one of the guys who started school in the fall; he probably was a little unsure of himself. Little bit apprehensive. But now that he’s close to the finish line, a lot of that doubt and being unsure had turned around for the better. Depending on what you want to get into, I have ran into teachers who will help you with whatever you need and take time with you in the classroom to make sure you understand what you need help in. This would be a great place to start to get your degree. The biggest advantage is that you can get your associate’s, technical certificate, or certificate. You can be in school two, three, four years at the most, depending on how many classes you take a semester. I feel it will be a great place to start for your college. The classes aren’t like huge like IUPUI lecture hall with like 500 students. It’s something you don’t have to deal with at Ivy Tech. A lot of the teachers in classes can work with you hands-on and one-on-one. They can help you have a better understanding of your work, when you ask questions.

BM discussed how the F.O.C.U.S. course helped him learn college and personal planning skills. He also stated how “being consistent,” “showing up to class on time and early,” alongside “completing assignments in a timely manner” are keys to success for Black male college students. BM stated with passion that “It comes down to if you want to go to school, look at your pros and cons.” MJ stated that Black male college students may want to “Just start with a couple of classes. If you’re thinking about it, it might be

for you, even when you may think it's not for you." Black male students should go for their college dreams even if they are hesitant about doing so.

SM was truly excited to see the next challenge during his college journey, as he excitingly stated "What's next...bring it on! At this point and time I feel like I can do it all. I feel like what they throw at me that I can do." SM wants to inspire Black male students saying they should know "they can do it. Nothing is impossible when you set your mind to it. Until you set the concept, nothing is impossible. Whatever you want, heck you can do it." The experiences of the participants gives a new perspective on learning and persisting through college as Black men. These men used their experiences for their own success, and provided inspirational words for the next generation of Black male college students who will come behind them. These experiences may have been both positive and negative, hard and easy, frustrating and triumphant in many different ways, but the participants took their experiences and turned them into moments of growth for themselves and other Black males who they'll encounter and inspire in the future.

Evidence of Internalization Stage Experiences

The Internalization experiences discussed in Cross' (1991) theory align with the participants recognizing their own Blackness through their own Black identity development, which was discovered in their own college journeys, specifically in the F.O.C.U.S course. With the Internalization of their own Black identity development, the participants went from student to teacher in a multiculturalist ambassador role. In this role, they became individuals of influence on discussing with other Black males who wanted to pursue college degrees and the best path of doing so. The participants shared their experiences regarding what they learned and about what they would tell other Black

male students on what to do for those who may be interested in pursuing their college degrees at a two-year community college.

MJ discussed how positive the F.O.C.U.S. course was and how it motivated him to let go of a lot of his past and negative experiences as a Black male college student.

Specifically MJ said,

one of the things I got out of [the course] was how a group of Black men came together and it wasn't no nonsense. Me coming from Gary, Indiana and being around my boys, it's a lot of unnecessary stuff.

Just the opportunity to interact with the Black males in the F.O.C.U.S. course allowed MJ to see that Black males could come together in a unified manner and be influential in each other's lives in a positive manner.

TW talked about how going to college made him see that he “discovered... determination. Once I'm determined, I'll continue until I get it. I won't give up.” TW in his own ambassador role discussed how by going to college with “resiliency” and “a listening ear to people around me”—if done with a proper mindset—can help Black males “push forward and make better decisions.” TW continued with additional advice for Black male students looking to pursue a college degree:

Sit down and make a five-year plan and be intentional with a five-year plan. Look at the job market and where I fit. Where are my goals for entrepreneurship and what does the global market look like? Being intentional. I think the conversations between Black men in college and looking to go to college are the same. If you can mitigate the problems, then that will help because they don't know. There has to be conversation on what jobs to go into. There has to be a conversation on where the job market is leaning towards. There are lots of African Americans missing the job opportunities because the job bandwagon is gone because everyone else was on the wave. The nursing wave is still going, but it may be oversaturated. But you still need surgeons, but they may miss that wave. They need to ask themselves how they can be the best they can be through character development and education.

The participants gave perspectives on their newfound Blackness after completing the F.O.C.U.S. course and discussed how they will encourage other Black male college students who are interested in attending college. SM stated that,

I love to say I learned first-hand from Black males and this is what is expected for you. I was excited to prove the world wrong. This is why I keep striving and thriving to make sure I'm not a statistic to people but an example to people.

MJ discussed how attending Ivy Tech Community College built his confidence. MJ tells Black male students "I would say go for it. You never know until you try. You will be nervous, but just try it." ER stated how Ivy Tech Community College is a great choice for Black males if they truly want a better opportunity for their futures.

Specifically ER noted,

If you're thinking about pursuing a college degree, I would say DO IT but under one condition, only if you want it for yourself. I talked to a lot of guys at work who say they don't want to do math and English because they don't want to do the grunt work to pass the classes. Know that you want to do it for yourself because if you don't want it, you're going to waste your time. If you want to start at Ivy Tech, a place like this is better than you doing nothing at all. I say that because this school offers a lot.

The data revealed lives of the participants after completing the F.O.C.U.S course reflected Cross' (1991) Black Racial Identity Development Theory in the stage of Internalization, and particularly at the "identity" stage of Multiculturalist. As Multiculturalists, these men demonstrated that they had discovered themselves to be Black men who not only were personally driven to succeed, but also were willing to develop this drive in other Black men. The F.O.C.U.S. course showed the participants through their experiences they were in a place of conformity and of being complacent in a White-based world. They then transitioned to a place of newfound Blackness that they now live in every day. These Black male students now use this newfound Black identity

to share their awakened experiences with other Black males who are looking to pursue a college degree and to help them on their path to success. The opportunities provided to the participants not only through academics but through racial awakening assisted them in their success in college and in their lives as Black males in the United States.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the sources of support as well as the challenges the participant faced as Black male college students. The selected excerpts provide a glimpse into the complex and sometimes complicated life trajectories of these Black men. The data further provide a window into the ways in which they navigate and manage their lives as Black men and college students. Each of the three themes concluded with an examination of how the men's disclosures related to Cross' (1991) Black Racial Identity Development theory. The support they received and their own determination made the educational attainment of these Black males possible. Specifically, these promotive factors facilitated educational attainment in the form of undergraduate and graduate degrees for these Black men.

Learning more about how a White-centered society viewed them and how by debunking thoughts and notions in their own minds about being successful in college, brought a sense of purpose for the participants. These students took that newfound knowledge of the power and importance of knowing how significant they are as Black men in society not just for the purpose of becoming successful, but also to share that information with other Black male community college students to help them succeed in college and other life endeavors. The integration of racially and culturally relevant knowledge into the F.O.C.U.S. course appeared to promote the participants' racial

identity development. The analyses showed that Cross' (1991) theory proved useful in describing elements of this development.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the experiences of five Black males during their lives before, during, and after enrollment at Ivy Tech Community College and in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course during either the fall 2012 or fall 2017 semester. The course was designed specifically for Black males enrolled at the institution to prepare to be academically successfully while also promoting their racial identity development and comradery with other Black men. Specifically, I sought to respond to the following research questions:

1. How do African American male students at a two-year community college experience the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, a course specifically designed to support Black male students' educational success and identity development as African American males?
2. How do these African American male students perceive the extent to which this experience has supported their potential educational success, potential identity development, and potential success in their future lives?

The narratives of the five Black males revealed their unique circumstances. These very personal stories, mostly unshared until the participation in this research study, were filled not only with struggle and challenge but also with accomplishments in the face of difficulties. The findings also illustrated common themes that provide insight into and an understanding of their lived experiences as Black males in pursuit of educational achievement. Data highlighted how the F.O.C.U.S. course improved the participants educational success, identity development, and potential future success. Several of the findings aligned with the theoretical framework, Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory. Broadly, these findings indicated that the retrospective

experiences of the participants reflected a process of racial discovery as captured in Cross' theory. The participants attributed their experiences in the course as opportunities for them to re-examine their perspectives about themselves and of others in a racialized society. Their identification as *Black men* often sparked discussions about being a "statistic," "proving to others" and "being exceptions to other Black men," thus drawing some attention to how their success in college and in life were influenced by messages about Blackness, and most of these messages were negative.

In this chapter, the results are connected to the research literature, the overall meaning of the research is described, the implications of the study are detailed, and my personal experience with the study is articulated.

Research Question 1: Discussion of Findings on Participants' Recalled Experiences

Life Before College at Ivy Tech and the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course

The results of this study, as related to this section, intersected with the literature in two ways; how societal pressures and racial inequities can hinder African American males from pursuing college and how the community college is a good start of a college career for African American males. First, this study found that there were several promotive factors that enabled the participants to attain college degrees in the midst of juggling responsibilities while facing White-based work and educational systems. Wood et al. (2015) stated how "Many factors have been identified which hinder their success at community colleges, such as external pressures which can consist of environmental pressures, lack of financial resources, supporting financial needs of others, and stressful life events" (pp. 2-3). Other factors can include "racial-gender stereotypes, male gender socialization, and lack of preparation for collegiate work" (Wood et al., 2015, pp. 4-5).

Hence, “in order to advance student success, systemic changes may be necessary, [and] much of this change begins with (re)specifying the perspectives of college professionals” (Wood et al., 2015, p. 11). However, one long-standing critique of community colleges is that they act as sidetracking agents. To this point, Adelman (2005) said,

Whether through placement testing, counseling, and orientation courses, the process may leave otherwise promising students who ‘aspire’—or otherwise might ‘aspire’— to bachelor’s and graduate degrees into dead-end occupational programs with no degree outcomes and lowering their education expectations along the way. (p. 109)

In response to this critique, the personal recollections of the participants illustrate that academic achievements were a priority before attending Ivy Tech Community College. For the participants, a common desire was the notion of “wanting more” than what they had. TW discussed how “too many Black males are outcasts of the society more than they will admit to, more than Black women.” TW, as well as other participants, felt through their experiences as Black males that society looked at Black males negatively and this was showcased in many different ways. BM talked on how “I was just wanting more. When I say more, I’m talking about opportunities, stability, and ultimate growth.” This statement shows how BM used the opportunity of attending a community college to get past societal pressures and inequitable situations he faced in his life before attending college. All participants wanted an opportunity to have a better life not only for themselves and their futures but also for their loved ones and friends. The notion of not just “wanting more” but also “wanting better” for their lives, futures, and families gave them a push and sense of hope for their college degrees at Ivy Tech Community College.

The second point connecting the literature review to the results of this study addresses life before college and provides perspective on how the community college is a good start of a college career for African American males. To this point, Kim (2014) said, “the best settings for the needed general studies are community college campuses. These settings are preferable because the majority of students of color, including Black men, begin their college experience at community colleges” (p. 14). Also, Harper and Wood (2015) state that “young Black men overwhelmingly select community college as their primary point of entry into postsecondary education” (p. 78). They contend that

... most of what has been published about male community college students narrowly pertains to how many enroll, earn an associate degree, and transfer. Little emphasis has been placed on demonstrated institutional commitment to the overall success of Black male students. (Harper & Wood, 2015, p. 32)

In response, Ivy Tech Community College provided an opportunity for Black male college students to have a better chance to complete their first-year seminar course through an affinity section that was created just for African American/Black male students. The participants in this study discussed in several ways how Ivy Tech Community College gave them a great start on their college journeys. ER stated how he knew with his job being moved to Mexico, “Going to Ivy Tech was a must for me once I got it into my mind that I have to do this.” BM failed to complete a year of technical college in Marietta, Georgia. He stated, “I wasn’t prepared for a lot of the big colleges like IUPUI out here.” He continued, “I knew Ivy Tech was the way to go” to get the help he needed to move beyond his other past college experiences. MJ’s wife motivated him to utilize his Army military benefits before they ran out and that motivational push was the

catalyst for MJ's decision to attend college. It was this encompassing support that allowed him to persist while also dealing with a lack of confidence. He said,

My wife was the one to convince and inspire me to go back to college. I decided Ivy Tech was the best place to start. It was a planned goal. I kept putting it off. I'm glad she pushed me. It's something I always wanted to do, just didn't have the motivation to do it.

From their changing and undesired job situations, to a shot at a better life for themselves and their families, to the chance to obtain that long-desired college degree, the opportunity to be an Ivy Tech Community College student gave the African American male participants a better chance to live the lives and futures that they saw for themselves. This study thus fills a significant gap in the literature, specifically, the lack of research pertaining to African American male students who attend community college. (Bush & Bush, 2010; Esters & Mosby, 2007; Harris III et al., 2017; Harris & Harper, 2008; Howard, 2014). This may seem like a small issue, but it is an important start on extending the research that addresses the experiences of Black males who choose to attend a community college and the reasons that community colleges can be more prepared in how to serve them and help them realize their desired college and future success goals.

Life as an Ivy Tech Black Male Student Inside and Outside of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course

In connecting this study to the literature about Black male community college students' lives inside and outside their community college experience, the point that stands out is how a community college creating a space for African American Males on the community college campus can lead to college success. However, to accomplish this Ingram and Coaxum (2018) suggest "community colleges need to adopt deeper anti-

deficit sensibilities coupled with intentional support services toward inspiring and engendering Black male student success” (p. 146). Furthermore, Wood and Palmer (2013) state that research about Black men at community colleges does exist and suggest that the majority of such research has “focused on personal goals” (p. 3) of Black males within community college, but noting that the research has not discussed “how these goals can engender academic and social development among Black male community college students” (p. 3). For example, Flowers (2006) stated that “African American students who either perceived greater social support or participated in social activities were more likely to persist in college” (p. 283). Also, Brooms (2018) stated

As a result of their on-campus engagement activities . . . students’ overwhelmingly believed with having contact with African American faculty, staff, administrators enhances the campus environment for African American males. Establishing space for Black students to develop connections, positive relationships, and solidarity can increase their sense of belonging on campus and aid their academic performance as well. (pp. 144-145)

Accordingly, the participants in this study provided several examples of how their experiences as Black male college students enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College and being students in the F.O.C.U.S. course helped them learn more about how to be successful in college and about their racial identity as Black males. The experience of enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College was one of ups and downs for the participants. Coming from different backgrounds and with different mindsets about the college experience and what it meant to them individually, the participants entered the enrollment process with different “hesitations” and “expectations” from “past education and racial experiences.” For example, TW complimented Ivy Tech Community College’s enrollment and registration process noting how “there were a lot of helpful people” at the

college. He discussed how Ivy Tech professionals “were trying to make Ivy Tech more culturally inclusive” and “be more accommodating” to Black college students by having more Black faculty and staff to connect with incoming Black male students when they first arrive at Ivy Tech Community College. From early experiences with enrolling at Ivy Tech to the support they got from friends and family, the participants all took the opportunity to be college students as one of “hope” and “opportunity” to accomplish the dreams that they had to complete their college degree and to make a better and more successful future for themselves and their families.

In addition, the participants discussed not only the positive experiences they had learning from one another through the F.O.C.U.S. course but also through the knowledge they received from the motivational videos, the real-life talk lessons from the professor, the guest speakers from Ivy Tech community college faculty and staff, and community members. For instance, ER discussed how the conversations in the class helped the Black males in the F.O.C.U.S. course “get to know yourself and how you relate on what you’re getting into.” TW noted how Indianapolis area Realtor’s discussion with the Black males in the F.O.C.U.S. course, stating “more Black men want to hear about than just get your education but more about meeting their needs and more there are needs are financial.”

Relatedly, BM said,

... what stood out the most was the processes of thinking. One of the things I looked forward to was the open dialogue and speak freely and when I say “freely,” I mean “FREELY.” It felt like college to me and made me feel encouraged to tell my story and really listen to what folks have been through.

The data gathered in this study adds to the literature as the participants’ experiences provide perspective on how a purposeful, inclusive affinity course can

provide new perspectives on life, bring a sense of purpose to students, increase in their academic success, grow their Black identity, and bring future success to their lives.

Life Trajectory Experiences After the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course

The literature connected to the research presented here provides perspective on how strategic and purposeful African American student engagement can lead to the success after community college. The experiences of the Black male college students after completing the F.O.C.U.S. course brought them to a place of realization regarding who they were as Black men and the opportunities they had for success in their futures. It would therefore stand to reason that with such tendencies in Black student achievement, “there should be a conscious effort on the part of community colleges to empower them toward success through strategic interventions and relevant engagement.” (Ingram & Coaxum, 2018, p. 146). Wood and Palmer (2016) state how

... efforts to redress the persistent and gross disparities between Black men and other groups in postsecondary access, engagement, and success must begin with the question: ‘What are we doing (or not doing) as a program, department, college, or institution to ensure that Black men have the experiences and opportunity they need to be successful. (p. 9)

Two key stakeholders must be addressed, and those are the faculty who are teaching Black males and, of course, the students themselves. When it comes to critical reflection in terms of addressing the issues that Black males face in the community college system, Wood et al. (2015) suggest that

the type of processing is crucial to the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. Such critical reflection involves deep introspection on one’s core values, assumptions, actions as well as that of others. When diving into how faculty and students should approach critical reflection in college, faculty should provide learning opportunities that encourage students to engage in critical introspection about what they believe, why they believe it, how they interact with others, and how others interpret them. On the other hand, when it comes to students, they should “be

provided with opportunities to apply the same critical lens to wider society, deconstructing social expectations and values, economic conditions, and structures that systematically disadvantage them. Overall, Black males in the community college system within this context of critical reflection, should be encouraged to consider the goals they have to themselves, why they have chosen these goals, and if such goals will help them changed their lives and communities in ways they desire. (p. 59)

Based on this study, the F.O.C.U.S. course provided an inclusive and student-engaged environment for Black male community college students to start out their college experience and learn not only about how to get a strong start to their journey, but how to provide support to other students who looked like them in order to help them be successful. The F.O.C.U.S. course led them to share knowledge with prospective Black male college students, which would have otherwise been impossible without their own successful college experiences. For example, ER shared how “perseverance” and “being dedicated to what I’m doing” are big points to having of college success. SM’s talked about how the F.O.C.U.S. course gave him the confidence to succeed in college and let him become a part of something bigger. He said, “I wanted to be part of those that say, they can do it.” BM stated with passion that “It comes down to if you want to go to school, look at your pros and cons,” and continued that the F.O.C.U.S. course helped him learn great college and personal planning skills. He also noted that “being consistent,” “showing up to class on time and early,” and “completing assignments in a timely manner” are keys to success for Black males. Thus, the data from this study connect with the literature by providing perspective on how strategic and purposeful African American student engagement can lead to success after college.

Research Question 2: Discussion of Findings on Participant's Recalled Experiences in Supporting their Educational, Identity, and Future Success

The data gathered from the participants was informed by Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory. Cross' (1991) Pre-Encounter stage looks at the life of a Black person before being immersed in the Black cultural experience. The colonized mindset provides a view of how a Black person may not have been taught properly on how to persist or navigate through the identity journey, along with not being properly educated on how to persist through their education journeys. Cross believes that Black people can "overcome their 'self-made' problems when they begin to learn how to fit into a relatively blameless system" (p. 196).

Cross' (1991) notion of racial-self-deprecation was evident for the participants, showing that their experiences were correlated with the Pre-Encounter stage of his Black Identity Development Theory. For example, MJ questioned his confidence in attending college because of some of his past racialized experiences.

Similarly, the struggles of not being successful or living up to what he thought a Black man should be, specifically, "hardworking and self-sufficient" were things SM faced in the past that made him nervous about starting life in the United States. SM spoke about how he thought that for him as an African, to "jump into a four-year university, it felt like it would have been a struggle." Feeling a lack of confidence as a result of being Black suggests that the participants were recalling some initial experiences of being "not good enough" because of their race, which is consistent with Cross' Pre-Encounter stage, where a person concedes to a status quo in which Whites are presumed to be better fit for college or high-paying occupations.

Cross' (1991) next stage, the Encounter stage, looks at the life experiences of a Black person during a Black racialized experience and provides a view of the person's own identity and identity changes. Cross discussed the Encounter stage in two parts: "destroying what one currently is and simultaneously and instantaneously grasping the essence of what one wants to become" (p. 202). Cross states how the person in the Immersion part of the stage has not yet progressed from the Encounter stage, but is willing to at this point. Therefore, the Black person immerses himself into these experiences as "a sea of Blackness" (Cross, 1991, p. 203) to help resolve the feelings of instability experienced in the prior Encounter stage. Finally, in the Emersion part of the stage, a Black person "emerges from the emotionality and dead end, either/or, racist, and oversimplified ideologies of the immersion experience where the person regains control of his or her emotions and intellect" (p. 207). The Black person starts to bring critical and cognitive thinking toward becoming a 'woke' Black person through their actions. This process enables Black people to be better able to survive in a White racialized world climate.

The participants provided several examples of how their experiences as Black male community college students in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course helped them to develop their identities and affirm their Blackness. SM found joy in being able to be on his college journey, stating how it "made me feel like I was beating a statistic," being a Black man who made it to college instead of to jail or dead. TW stated how the discussions in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course were what "more Black men want to hear about than just get your education but more about meeting their needs" as Black males. The comradery developed through engagement, discussions, and interactions with the Black male

students not only helped them learn how to persist academically in college, but also how to deal with experiences of racism.

Cross' (1991) Internalization stage examines Black cultural experiences and a Black person's reflections and changes as a result of those experiences. Cross stated that in the Internalization stage "[p]henomenologically... the person perceives himself or herself to be totally changed, with a new world view and a revitalized personality" (p. 211). Likewise, the multiculturalist identity illustrates how a Black person's identity is changed and how they become influencers of their newly found racial identity and work to help bring identity change for other Black people. Even with the Internalization being the final stage of the model, internalization occurs throughout one's lifetime.

The participants provided their life experiences regarding where they felt they were in their Black identity development after completing the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course and after some years of life experiences as a Black male in society. The participants did not come to a full completion of the Internalization stage and possibly never will. To this point, SM stated

I love to say I learned first-hand from Black males and this is what is expected for you. I was excited to prove the world wrong. This is why I keep striving and thriving to make sure I'm not a statistic to people but an example to people.

TW discussed how in going to college with "resiliency" and "a listening ear to people around me"—if done with a proper mindset—can help a Black male "push forward and make better decisions." Similarly, MJ discussed how important the F.O.C.U.S. course was in showing him how being around positivity in conversation motivated him to forget about much of his past and negative interactions with other Black males. Specifically, MJ said "one of the things I got out of it was how a group of Black

men came together and it wasn't no nonsense. Me coming from Gary, Indiana and being around my boys, it's a lot of unnecessary stuff.”

The participants provided their perspectives regarding how their Black identity has shaped and changed through their experiences as students at Ivy Tech Community College and in the F.O.C.U.S. course. The participants understand that they will continue to be challenged and changed by what they face in society as Black males. Through their community college experiences, they hope to have better opportunities for their futures.

All of the participants gave advice to current and prospective Black male college students who would start their college journeys at community colleges. The participants shared words of encouragement for other Black males who are interested in pursuing a college degree in a multiculturalist ambassador role. They said:

“I would say go for it!” (MJ)

“Sit down and make a five-year plan and be intentional with a five-year plan.” (TW)

“Know that you want to do it for yourself because if you don't want it, you're going to waste your time. If you want to start at Ivy Tech, a place like this is better than you doing nothing at all. I say that because this school offers a lot.” (ER)

“They can do it. Nothing is impossible when you set your mind to it” (SM)

Limitations of Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory range from a lack of critical context and qualitative views from college students, to changes with the stages and identities of Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development theory over the decades. Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory has changed over time.

Recall from earlier that Cross' original model was developed in 1971, revised again in 1991, and then modified again in 2000. This is important because,

... while the stages have lessened the number, the identities of what Black people recognize themselves as have increased in numbers. With the changing landscape of research and identities of black people over the years and since the times of the civil rights movement, it's a question to ask if these changes were truly necessary to make or were they made to appease the masses. (De Larrosa & Butner, 2000, p. 1)

When working with this theory, educators must know which version of the they are using and understand the students they are serving to make sure the stages are being seen in the development of Black students. Knowing what stages Black male students are in when they arrive at a college can be a major advantage for educators and assist them with teaching and supporting these students through their college journey. Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development Theory may not have necessarily been created for Black people at certain times in their lives like students who are currently in college. Despite limitations of Cross' (1991) theory, when it is applied to Black male community college students, it is clear that Cross has made an important contribution.

In conclusion, with Cross' (1991) theory, a final limitation and reference for future research could be to see if the Black Identity Development Theory is possibly the best theory to use for this specific type of research. There are other theories that could provide a more critical analysis of the experiences of African American males who are students in a community college since Cross' (1991) theory starts out with more of a focus on the individual rather than a systemic focus. One theory in particular could be Critical Race Theory (CRT) (1987). (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2006; Lynn and Dixson, 2013; Kumasi, 2015) The five tenets of CRT could provide a critical examination of past, present, and future implications regarding the experiences

of African American male community college students. These tenets could provide an in-depth analysis of the social constructs, intersectionality issues, faced microaggressions, and rooted institutional racism that African American males students who enter and matriculate through community colleges face. Cross' Black Identity Development Theory provides a foundation for what community colleges can use in order to help shape curriculum, courses, and programs to help Black male community college students through their college, identity development, and future career journeys.

The Overall Meaning of the Results

The findings from this study indicate four key conclusions related to the participants' college journeys at a two-year community college. One conclusion is how societal pressures and racial inequities can hinder African American males from pursuing college and how community college is a good start for a college career for African American males. Another conclusion is how a community college creating a space for African American males on the community college campus can lead to college success. A third conclusion provided perspective on how strategic and purposeful African American student engagement can lead to the students' future success after college. A fourth conclusion is that a purposefully created initiative, such as the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course for African American/Black males, serves as a quality retention and success tool for Black male community college students.

Participants shared their various experiences of their involvement in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course fostered a desire to excel not only as students in college but also in other future endeavors. For many of the participants, the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course helped shape their educational and racial identities. The data gathered from this study suggest

that purposeful and intentional initiatives (i.e. programs, services, courses) that have a focus of assisting with the success of Black male students are needed and can be effective. This study adds to the literature by explicitly identifying, describing, and discussing the experiences of Black male college students from a two-year college who completed an affinity course.

The responses of the participants from this study generally validate the research. That is, the affinity course provides support and direction for success for students' academic and career futures. In light of Cross' (1991) Black Identity Development theory, the intentions of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S course did not initially seek out to assist in the identity development of these Black men. However, it played a role in shaping their identity development through the inclusivity and positivity.

I would have liked to have all of the participants together in one room to discuss their experiences of being students in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course. However, the overall consensus from the individual interviews was that the course helped them in their academic and future pursuits, and positively supported their identities as Black males. These findings suggest that a college can truly assist with the success of their students if they provide intentional and purposeful initiatives, and if those initiatives are catered to the specific to the needs of the students.

Whether in research, action, or both, colleges and universities are demonstrating commitments to creating inclusive environments for Black male community college students (Kim, 2014; Wood, Harris, & White, 2015; Wood & Williams, 2013). While many efforts have seemingly good intentions, it is necessary to acknowledge Black male community college students' perceptions and experiences in those environments are

important. Their perceptions need to be collected in order to provide real life expertise and to shape purposeful initiatives for other incoming Black male students. These effects can have a positive impact on students' success in college. Using Cross' (1991) framework of Black Identity Development, more research is needed to understand how this theory, shaped into college programming and course curricula, can affect Black males in college and in society at large.

The perspectives of Black male college students provided here include several key examples of how a purposefully created initiative can provide not only direct support for educational success and identity development, but also how an initiative can gather a marginalized group in a positive setting to help them succeed. The participants' voices speak to the importance of the implementation of strategic and supportive initiatives for Black male community college students. These initiatives are necessary in order to provide inclusive opportunities to learn from one another and to understand how to be successful college students.

In conclusion, the experiences of the Black male college students matter. If the Black male student experience is ignored by colleges and universities, then those in leadership positions can perpetuate injustices, biases, and assumptions that will further hinder the success of Black male college students.

The Need for a Black Racial Identity Development?

Racism is a phenomenon that began well before the creation of the Black Racial Identity Development Theories (Cross, 1991). It has a psychological impact on both the oppressor and the oppressed. The Black Racial Identity Development theory (Cross, 1991), according to Jackson (2012), was heavily influenced by the Civil Rights

Movement of the 1960s and it renewed focus on racism and the many forms of discrimination that Blacks/African Americans experienced in the United States. Theories that center on identity development are relevant to the study of Black people. Cross' (1991) theory is an explication of the many different thoughts, processes, and challenges that Black people as a whole face every single day as a result of racism. Helms (1990) stated that

... the term racial identity entails a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" and that "this perception of commonality reflects knowledge of a common thread of historical experience and a sense that each member of the collectivity shares in this historical experience. (pp. 3-4)

Cross (1991) also dove into this perspective by stating that there is a common experience that Black people share, but that these experiences do not shape a singular, common Black experience. There is variability among Black people, and the theorists of racial identity proposed that there are certain patterns that emerge as a result of the historical experience that are common to a particular racial group, in this case, Black people. Black racial identity development theories have provided researchers with an understanding of how the common experience of racism and Blacks' different ways of understanding and coping with it have an influence on a variety of factors. Also, Black racial identity development can allow for individuals who are not Black to be able to learn from Black people in terms of their racial identity.

While Cross' (1991) work did not venture into the area of mental health, Helms (1990) created an expanded model geared toward mental health practitioners of all races, and presents nuanced knowledge on how racial identity schemata (based on racial world views) can influence counseling and psychotherapy interactions. Thompson & Carter's

work (1997) extends Helms' expanded formulations of Cross' theory to include the application of the model to different contexts like classrooms, courtrooms, and so forth. Aligned with Cross' theory, an understanding of the conditions that lead to the adoption of false and supremacist ideologies, self-doubt, inaction, that is, the interaction of the individual and the environment, is important information for mental health practitioners.

A Black person gets to debunk and challenge the ideologies, notions, and racial connotations of who people think they are and who people have told them that they are as Black people in Cross' Black Identity Development theory stages. Part of this process entails gaining knowledge about and understanding of Black people's humanity according to how they are viewed from others and how they view themselves. In academic settings, this process can occur through writings, formal lectures, and informal engagements. Such learning opportunities can start to reshape students' minds about who they are but what they can do in their lives to promote positive opportunities for themselves and others who look like them.

Likewise, a student affairs professional can be advantaged by a theory that proposes changes to a student's college environment (like programs on a campus, interactions with key educators, and so on). These changes by student affairs professionals can also facilitate Black students to see where they are as students and what assistance and resources the college can provide to help them matriculate through college. McElderry et al. (2018) discussed how the University of Missouri's Black Men's Initiative (MBMI) for first-year, Black male-identified students used Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) Black Identity Development Theory as well as Strayhorn's (2012) conceptualization of a Sense of Belonging to create the program. This program ensures

interaction with a diverse group of Black men with multiple identities who are engaged on campus and in the community. The stages of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971) inform a significant portion of the curriculum and aids students in exploring what a healthy Black identity entails. Most MBMI students were found to be in the Encounter and Immersion-Emersion stages at the start of the program (McElderry et al., 2018, p. 40). Also, with this particular program, various campus partners make in-class visits to offer campus resources and ways to connect and interact with other key stakeholders at the University of Missouri.

To gauge potential impact of the program on academic achievement, a comparative analysis of each student's projected versus actual GPA was completed along with retention and graduation rates at the end of the first semester. Reflection papers written by the participants allowed them to critically examine social and academic topics while simultaneously addressing their Black identity development and sense of belonging. These findings allowed the leadership team to encourage the students to transition to a state of embracing what it means to be Black and exuding self-love, which is within the Internalization and Internalization-Commitment stages of Black Identity Development (Cross, 1991). Such intentional programming, services, and initiatives embedded in Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross, 1991) can help student affairs professionals know how to best support the students that they serve and provide focused learning to help them progress toward completing their college dreams. When educators know where their students are within the stages of the Cross' Black Racial Identity Development Theory as these students enter and matriculate through college, these higher education professionals can appreciate the vast diversity of these students.

More importantly, this information can be key to better serving these students.

Knowledge about this stage development can help these professionals guide Black male students through college, and find better ways to live, work, and serve others in their lives.

Cross' (1991) Black Racial Identity Development Theory can translate into action to create a positive pandemic effect of channeling positive thoughts, knowledge, and learning of Black excellence for other Black people, and in turn, help promote more positive interactions and outcomes throughout Black communities. The need for Black Racial Identity Development gives Black people a charge to break from a White assimilationist, miseducated, and self-hatred worldview. This separation, and the process that follows, can create more positive relationships, more meaningful interactions in the receiving and giving of Black cultural knowledge, and greater determination of Black people to push toward opportunities that will help them thrive for themselves and for future generations.

Implications for Program Revision: Creating Environments and Experiences of Success for African American/Black Male College Students

It is imperative to discuss the importance of sharing the experiences of success and creating environments for success for African American/Black male college students. These students require crucial attention from higher education professionals to succeed not only in their college ambitions but also attention to assist with racism that they face in their every lives. This attention can come in several forms such as created courses, on-campus programs, and organizations that focus on assisting with the college success, retention, inclusion, and graduation of Black male college students (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper

& Quaye, 2007; Wood & Harper, 2015). These different kinds of initiatives must have caring and supportive higher education professionals who not only care about the implementation and yearly production of these initiatives for incoming Black male college students but also take time to get to know the Black male students in a deeper fashion than just college students. There are few studies such as this one that has been completed with the noted experiences of Black male community college students in a focused, academic experience just for their demographic. That why it is important to continue to create such courses, programs, and initiatives at community colleges for Black males such that they are can accomplish their college goals and learn about who they are and what they face racially as Black males.

The experiences of success for Black male college students are those that must not be neglected when implementing these initiatives. The experiences of the Black male students must be collected in different forms such as interviews, surveys, and through the sharing of their stories with other Black male students. These experiences must be collected not only for research purposes but also to ensure that the success needs of the Black male students are being met through the created initiatives. Further, higher education leadership can then discuss why such initiatives are important to maintain on college campuses. From the initiatives discussed in Chapter Two to the experiences of the students who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course at Ivy Tech Community College, more initiatives that help create environments and experiences of success for African American/Black males must be implemented at colleges and universities to assist with the necessary support, nurturing, and care of these students.

Implications for Practice: Higher Education Faculty and Staff

Throughout this study, I have stated how a purposefully created, inclusive affinity course at a two-year community college can influence how Black male college students improve their educational success, identity development, and potential future success. The findings from this study indicate that various aspects of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course for African American/Black males—namely, the written and unwritten curriculum discussed previously— facilitate those three elements for Black male students. Based upon the findings of this study, I have identified some implications for practice for both higher education faculty and staff.

Participants explicitly mentioned that their learning experiences in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course differed from what and how they were learning in their other college courses during either the fall 2012 or fall 2017 semester. The students referred to the deep discussions, the riveting guest speakers, and the instructor's flexibility with course material and discussions to better educate and cater to the learning needs of the Black male students. Participants' responses to the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course reflect the benefits of taking traditional curricula and maximizing the students' experiences by creating affinity sections for different demographics of students. I challenge higher education faculty and staff members, no matter the subject area of the classes, to embrace both cultural relevance and creativity in their classrooms.

Additionally, the findings from this study clearly indicate that the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course serves as a retention aid for students. Participants shared various examples of how their involvement in the course motivated them to excel not only in that class but also in other courses and in their future lives. Faculty, staff, community

members, and even family and friends support played critical roles in facilitating the success efforts of the student-participants. Higher education faculty and staff should look at efforts, such as the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, to create learning spaces that affect specific demographics of students the most. These environments—complete with inclusive curricula and supportive educators who serve students’ specific learning needs—should be caring and nurturing learning spaces such that students can have the discussions and learning opportunities that are necessary for success.

My Dissertation Experience

From the orientation day for Cohort IV of the Urban Education Studies Ph.D. program, I knew I wanted to conduct this study with Ivy Tech Community College and the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course. I have seen firsthand how an affinity section of a traditional introduction to a college course—created specifically for African American/Black males—could impact a group of students, higher education professionals, and community members. Seeing this impact firsthand has made writing this dissertation one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. To have started the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course with individuals such as Ann Heiny and Maurice “Curtis” Wells who just wanted to do something more purposeful and intentional for the many African American/Black male college students, made writing this dissertation even more meaningful. This dissertation impacted me in a way that is almost unexplainable. I never would have imagined writing this dissertation in such a hostile worldwide racial climate that put the world on notice more than ever that BLACK LIVES MATTER! To see wide-eyed, excited Black male students start off their college journeys naïve and anxious about what the future may hold

for them, then after years of hard work and determination, get to reach their college goals is testament that when people come together with a purpose, it can help others.

What was difficult through this dissertation journey was being unable to interview more students who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course and collect their experiences regarding the class and their college journeys. As stated previously, the participants were selected purposively and conveniently. Even though a majority of the participants were or were about to be college graduates, many African American/Black males who completed the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course did not persist successfully to attain their college degree goals. Learning from these men regarding what more we as higher education professionals could have done to help them reach their college dreams is important. Learning from the participants and their experiences in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course, alongside all the struggles that they faced while pursuing their college dreams, is what I enjoyed most as I wrote this dissertation. As an educator, there is no better feeling in the world than to receive a hug, handshake, and smile from former students and to actually hear them say, “I did it, Mr. Turner! I graduated from college!”

Conclusion

To reach their college goals, African American/Black male college students truly need special assistance from higher education professionals. When helping these students persist towards their college and career dreams, we must not ignore the microaggressions and daily negative images and stereotypes that are placed on Black male college students inside and outside of their college campus. We need to create initiatives that not only allow Black male college students to unite purposefully to learn from higher education professionals and students who look like them, and care about their futures, but also listen

to the experiences of these Black male college students for a better idea on how to assist and serve them. Taking the time to learn about the experiences of Black male college students builds trust in a college system that the students do not always trust. The support and care implemented through the creation of initiatives that show these students that they matter to their institutions will allow these students to know that, because they have a supportive institution standing by them, they can reach their dreams no matter the obstacles.

The Academe—i.e., higher education—must focus on both supporting the Black male college students at their individual institutions and taking time to find ways of encouraging these students to return as professionals, thereby inspiring other Black male college students to persist through and graduate from college. Black male college student graduates who return to the alma maters to work, matters for future Black male student success. For Black male college graduates to attain their college degrees and career dreams, then return to work on their college campuses, assists other Black male college students and creates a cycle of success that resists the oppression that Black males experience every day.

Appendix A: Informed Consent

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET Protocol Number: 1712578533

Black Identity Development on a First Year Affinity Course for African American Males at a Two-Year Community College

You are invited to participate in a research study of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course that you completed at Ivy Tech Community College. You were selected as a possible subject because the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course Instructor, John C. Turner selected you to participate, as you were a student who is age 18 and above who completed this course during the Fall 2012 or Fall 2017 semesters at Ivy Tech Community College. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by John C. Turner, Urban Education Doctoral Student at Indiana University School of Education at IUPUI, who will be the Co – Investigator as Dr Jim Scheurich, Urban Education Professor at IUPUI, will be the Lead Investigator.

STUDY PURPOSE

The literature review for this dissertation examines past and present programs and classes put into place for African American males at community colleges around the United States to see how these programs assisted with the persistence, retention, and graduation of these students. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of African American male students who take a community college-based educational course or do a community college-based educational program whose purpose is to improve their educational success and their potential future success.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 3-4 subjects who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:

You will be a part of three individual 45 minute to 1 hour Interviews that will ask you questions about the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course. These questions will all be answered at the leisure of the participant and a participant does not have to answer questions they do not feel comfortable answering when asked.

We are not able to provide you with the full purpose of the study at this time, but will provide additional information at the conclusion of the study.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

While on the study, the risks, which are minimal are: Participants in this study may feel uncomfortable answering questions and can decline to answer.

Possibility of loss of confidentiality

While completing the survey, you may feel uncomfortable answering questions and can decline to answer

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

There is no direct benefit to participation, but we hope that this research of the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course, will be a great help to the Indianapolis Community and United States.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases, video, and audio recordings, along with completed interview notes in which results can be stored will be in the secured locked office of Dr Jim Scheurich.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher, Dr Jim Scheurich, at jscheuri@iu.edu. If you cannot reach the researcher during regular business hours (i.e., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), please call the IU Human Subjects Office at 800-696-2949 or irb@iu.edu.

In the event of an emergency, you may contact Dr Jim Scheurich.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at 800-696-2949 or irb@iu.edu.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THIS STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University. Participants in this study may feel uncomfortable answering questions and can decline to answer.

Your participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to your consent in the following circumstances: if consented participation in the study that was first agreed to is not followed correctly.

You will be told about new information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to stay in the study. This study may be terminated by Dr. Jim Scheurich if decisions are made about the study that are not in correlation with the original study plans.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT

I, _____, In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____

Date: _____

(must be dated by the subject)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!



Black Identity Development on a First Year Affinity Course for African American Males
at a Two-Year Community College

Researcher: John C. Turner; Doctoral Student; Indiana University School of Education at
IUPUI

902 West New York Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202; Email: jct@iu.edu

Who is Included?

Participants will self- identify as Black/African American male and will have been a student at Ivy Tech Community College during the Fall 2012 or the Fall 2017 semesters for the inclusion criteria in this study.

Why is the research taking place?

The goal of this research is to examine past and present programs and classes put into place for African American males at community colleges around the United States to see how these programs assisted with the persistence, retention, and graduation of these students.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of African American male students who take a community college-based educational course or do a community college-based educational program whose purpose is to improve their educational success and their potential future success.

What are the possible risks or harms if I take part?

The risks of participating are minimal. The ways that confidentiality will be protected have already been described. In the unlikely event that you find that what you discussed in the interview is upsetting to you after the interview is over, please be in touch with me. I will provide you with some names and numbers of individuals or agencies that can provide further assistance.

What are the possible benefits?

Although being interviewed will not be of direct benefit to you, it is also possible that having a chance to share your story will be an interesting and possibly a rewarding experience. In addition, your participation in this study will help in furthering knowledge in the field of education. Your responses may provide information for service providers as to how to better service this vulnerable population and assist those working with them to foster academic success.

Furthermore, by sharing your personal story related to being a Black/African American male college student who, you may be serving to inspire other Black male college students that may be experiencing a similar life story as yours.

What are my choices if I don't take part?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Although I would like you to answer as many questions as you can, you have the right to not respond to any of the questions. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without any risk to you.

Who would see study information about me?

All precautions will be taken to protect your privacy. All information you report to me is confidential. All identifying data will be stored on the computer with password protected and a file cabinet securely locked. Pseudonyms may possibly be used to replace your names for confidentiality purposes and all tape recording will be erased upon completion of the dissertation project.

Would I be paid or compensated for my time? No.

Will the study cost me anything? No.

Appendix C: IVYT FOCUS Course Research Protocol Depth Questions

A- Life Before College

1. Tell me about the first time you thought about attending college at Ivy Tech Community College
2. Was this a planned college goal of yours or did the thought of going to college come randomly?
3. What were some of the initial thoughts, feelings and reactions associated with attending college?
4. How would you say preparing to go to college and what you heard about college before enrolling at Ivy Tech Community College affected your emotional and psychological well-being?
5. What meaning did applying to college have for you and actually going through the enrollment and registration process?
6. Who did you speak with soon after you started the college application process?
7. With who did you live at that time?
8. How was your relationships with your family and friends at the time you applied for college? What was some of their reactions as you applied to college at Ivy Tech Community College?
9. What different things were going on in your life at that time that made enrolling for college a good decision for you?
10. How old were you at the time when you looked to enroll at Ivy Tech Community College?
11. What were some of the attributing factors to continuing your education and/or going to college?

12. What were some of the difficulties you faced in first enrolling and registering for college?
13. What kind of schedule did you set up for yourself (i.e. full time or part time)?
14. Were you working a job at that time?
15. What did it mean to you starting college as a Black Man at Ivy Tech Community College?
16. What was your first initial reactions hearing about the IVYT Course for Black Males offered at Ivy Tech Community College?
17. Do you remember who first told you about the course and registered you for it?

B- First Reaction to the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course and becoming an Ivy Tech Community College Student

1. Tell me about your very first day on campus and going into your first class?
2. Where was the location and what semester were you as student in the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?
3. What were your first reactions attending the IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course Ivy Tech Community College?
4. How did you feel honestly being in a College class with all Black males?
5. What was your thoughts about the course after the first class was completed?
6. What were your academic aspirations after the first week of classes for you in the Fall semester?
7. How was your desire to continue your education impacted by the completion of the first week of classes?

8. What supports did you have in place that assisted with being able to continue your education during the Fall semester?
9. In what form was this support provided? Emotional? Financial? Connections to resources? Other forms of support?
10. Tell me what first stood out to you with the speakers during the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?
11. What were the assignments or test like during the course and what stood out most to you about the work in the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?
12. Do you remember the F.O.C.U.S. Reflection assignments that you completed after each test about your thoughts on the course so far? What do you remember about completing them?
13. What about your classmates of the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course do you remember? How well did you all get along or grow with one another?
14. What moments in the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course stood out to you more than any others that you can remember?
15. Tell me about your thoughts on your Professor and how he was teaching the course?
16. How did your other Professors and classes pan out for you at the end of the Fall semester at Ivy Tech Community College?

17. What were your final thoughts as you completed the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?
18. What feelings did you have as you planned on going forward with your Education after completing the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?

C-Life Trajectory Experiences after the Fall Semester and IVYT course

1. As you look back at your experience, which events related to you being in the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course stand out to you the most?
2. Looking back at your experience at Ivy Tech Community College, which events related to your pursuit of education stand out the most to you?
3. What ended up being the concluding matter with you regarding your college experience at Ivy Tech Community College?
4. How did this experience change you? Did it serve as a turning point experience for you in your future life?
5. Was your sense of purpose enhanced by completing the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course? Is yes, how?
6. If you could do it over again, is there anything you would change about your experience? Why?
7. Tell me about the strengths you discovered or developed through your experiences as a student in college and with completing the Fall IVYT F.O.C.U.S. course?

D- Debriefing Questions

1. After reflecting on your experience, is there something that you would like to add for me to better understand your journey as a Black male college student?

2. What advice would you give to Black males who are currently thinking about pursuing their college degrees?
3. Is there any particular advice that you would give to Black males who are in High School or working right now who are looking to start their college careers at a Community College?

New Student Seminar
FOCUS Course Syllabus

Course Information

New Student Seminar

IVYT 120

FOCUS – Furthering Opportunities and
Connecting Us To Success

Three (3) Semester Credit Hours

Instructor

Name: _____

Office: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Department Chair

A H

NMC 400A

Course Description

New Student Seminar enhances success in college by assisting students in obtaining skills necessary to their educational, career, and life objectives. Students will create and apply

critical thinking strategies in areas of time management, learning styles, study skills, career planning, resource utilization and media literacy. Students will learn skills that will allow them to be self-aware, self-motivated, and personally responsible.

In addition to the standard New Student Seminar curriculum, FOCUS assists African American males with exploring their culture, status, and identity in the world today. Students will learn about current roles as African American males in society and how their work in college can lead them down a life of success for themselves and others that surround them. Students will be immersed in conversations with class speakers, journal and discussion board reflections, diversity and educational initiatives, and critical thinking strategies.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- Identify learning style and personality type and apply information to develop a personal study and learning strategy.
- Learn to adjust and successfully navigate the college infrastructure and its social environment.
- Develop or increase computing skills: email, institutional web sites, and online learning.
- Demonstrate ability to access library resources both on campus and online.
- Develop effective application of study skills: note taking, listening, textbook reading, test preparation, concentration and memory skills, and time management.
- Explore and apply health/wellness and stress management techniques.
- Recognize and implement sound practices in personal resource management.
- Locate and utilize a variety of community resources.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of human diversity on college, career, and life experiences.
- Set academic goals and explore career options.

Required Text

On Course, Study Skills Plus Edition, by Skip Downing
ISBN#: 978-1-4390-8522-6

Who Owns The Ice House, by Clifton Taulbert and Gary Schoeniger
ISBN#: 978-0971305915

Course Grading

Point distribution is as follows:

Participation (32 x 5 pts)	160
Assessments (2 x 15 pts)	30
Journals (8 x 10 pts)	80
Discussion Boards (8 x 10pts)	80
Community Involvement	80
Ice House Opportunity Discovery Group Presentation	80
Career and Life Plan	80
Diversity Project	80
EPortfolio	50
Tests (3 x 60 pts)	<u>180</u>
TOTAL	900

Grading Scale

<u>Grade Letter</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Points</u>	<u>Points</u>
A	90%-100%	795-900
B	80%-89%	710-794

C	70%-79%	625-709
D	60%-69%	540-624
F	Below 60%	539 and below

Class Participation

Your presence and contribution to this collaborative classroom are crucial not only to your own learning, but also for that of your classmates. If you have an emergency and must miss class, please email your instructor or leave a message, as attendance will be taken. You also need to check Blackboard to find out what you missed and what was assigned. Since a percentage of your total points depend on individual class participation, failure to attend class sessions will have a negative impact on your final grade.

Course Assignments

1. Self-Assessment Pre-Test and Post-Test (2 Assessments, 15 pts each)
The self-assessment at the beginning of the course will identify current beliefs and behaviors regarding the 8 *On Course* principles of student success.
2. Journal Entries/Discussion Boards (8 Journals, 8 Discussion Boards 10 pts each; 160 total pts)
Journals and Discussion Boards helps individuals build self-awareness and demonstrate understanding of new concepts. Complete journal entries and Discussion Boards in Blackboard.

3. Community Involvement (1 Reflection, 80 total pts.)

In this reflection you will explore your place in the community and what it truly means to be connected to something bigger than yourself. You will have the opportunity to explore the importance of interdependence as it relates to community involvement through interaction and discussions with classmates, family, community leaders, etc.

To begin, answer the following questions:

How do you define community involvement?

How does it impact you as an individual?

How does it impact the people around you?

What are some problems in the community that you would like to work on and why?

When thinking about your community, where does it begin and end for you?

Secondly, students will identify, read about, and submit a 350 word reflection about a past or current event that brought the masses together in a show of community support in a time of anticipation, need or crisis.

A qualifying past or current event includes:

The events of 911
The Civil Rights Movement
Upcoming presidential election
The Trayvon Martin shooting
The Rodney King incident
2008 presidential election

This reflection should focus on the impact that the identified event had on the world around us and the ripple effect it had on you personally.

Lastly, students will attend a community event and submit a 350 word reflection, addressing what they experienced and how it may influence them to get involved in future community events. Also submit a program, flyer, etc. from the event to the instructor. You may wish to add photos as well.

A qualifying community event includes:

Any event hosted by Ivy Tech Community College (Lawrence or NMC campus) such as a club meeting, lecture, library event, learning center event, student activity event. Volunteer opportunity such as, “Race for the Cure” or “AIDSwalk.” Any cultural event such as First Friday Art Walk, Jazz Fest, French Market, Oktoberfest, Black Expo Summer Celebration, etc.

4. ICE HOUSE OPPORTUNITY DISCOVERY GROUP PRESENTATIONS (80 pts)

Topics:

CHOICE
OPPORTUNITY
ACTION
WEALTH
BRAND
COMMUNITY

Students will divide into groups and take responsibility for one of the above ICEHOUSE THEMES topics. Students will prepare and present this material to classmates on their assigned dates. They will take their idea and try to create a relevant, real opportunity that will be helpful to Ivy Tech Students.

Required presentation elements include:

Active participation by all group members
Visual aid (PowerPoint suggested)
Class activity
Handout

Printed list of 3-4 recommended resources beyond the textbook
Application to other real life classes

5. Career and Life Plan Project (80 pts)

In this project you will create a 750-1000 word reflection that will reflect the following:

a road map showing the way to your college and life destinations

a career path leading to your dreams

a “living” document that is open to change as your life roles and goals change

As you create this “living” document you will be challenged to begin with the end in mind and take complete ownership of your plan as you envision the career and life that you ultimately want.

The final composition of you plan will include the following:

Personal mission statement

Roles and goals

Vision of your dream job

Personal success rules

Vision of your perfect day

In order to fully complete this project you will need to conduct an informational interview and/or shadow a professional in the field you are pursuing. At minimum, ask the questions provided below and record the answers in your notebook or in a Word

document. Do not post your answers in the actual project. Your answers will help you compose the dream job portion of your plan.

Please comment in depth regarding the "fit" of this career to your personality, talents and skills. If this career no longer seems like a good fit, what is your plan B?

Interview questions to ask the professional:

- * What drew you to this profession?
- * How much education did you complete and where?
- * Please describe a typical day in your work week. What do you do on a daily basis?
- * What are your favorite aspects of your job?
- * What are your least favorite aspects of your job?
- * What frustrates you the most on the job?
- * How many hours per week do you work? Do you control your schedule?
- * How stable is your job? Do you worry about losing your job?
- * How much stress do you experience from your work?
- * When you are not at work, how often do you think or worry about aspects of your

work?

- * What's your advice to someone thinking of entering this field?

6. Diversity Project (80 pts)

Students will first explore how they formed their personal identities and what it means to be "me," by answering the following questions:

How do I identify?

Gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, national heritage, occupation, family roles, sexual orientation, sports fan, hobbies, accomplishments, politics, area in which I live, causes I support, abilities/disabilities, socio-economic status, etc.

What words describe me?

Who are/were the most influential persons in my life?

How do/did they impact me?

What did they contribute to my identity?

How am I like these people or different from them?

How do I impact my community?

Family, neighbors, classmates, co-workers/supervisor, employer, employees, customers, fellow citizens of city/state/nation/world, environment, etc.

Secondly, students will work in pairs or small groups to discover the identities of their classmates and explore similarities and differences. They will explore how they interact with others who are (or appear) different than themselves and discuss the following topics:

What stereotypes am I aware of re: me and others?

What concerns do we have about people who are different from us?

What am I curious about re: others' identities?

What worries me about people who are (or appear) different than me?

What do I appreciate about people who are different than me?

Students will submit a 750-1000 word reflection on this identity exploration activity and how diversity impacts communities and individuals.

7. EPortfolio Project – (80 Pts)

Blackboard Description (this would be a separate tab in BB)

Congratulations! If you have been instructed to complete this assignment that means you have almost successfully completed this course. This is an exciting time because either you are completing your first or second semester at Ivy Tech. We mentioned in week one that the first couple of semesters are extremely important because they set the tone for things to come in your experience with Ivy Tech.

So as you depart from IVYT 120 FOCUS and embark on the rest of your journey, we need to consider what you will need to pack and take along with you. For the purposes of moving on to your second or third semester we will pack light. In this final project you will create an electronic portfolio or eportfolio that will allow you to pack and access some useful reflections and tools beyond our time together.

Your packing list will include the following items:

1. Learning styles inventory and reflection
2. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment and reflection
3. Self-care plan
4. Dream team contacts
5. What is your success identity: 50 successes in 50 days

Once you complete this project look at your EPortfolio as a “living online space” that will continue to grow as you collect more valuable personal and professional information that will help you in reaching some of your most cherished goals and dreams.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES:

Learning Styles Inventory and Reflection – Students will complete the learning styles inventory per the On Course website. They will complete a short reflection regarding what they learned about themselves per the inventory. The reflection will be a modified version of the reflection found in journal 12 of the traditional 120 course.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Assessment and Reflection – Students will complete this assessment and reflection via a workshop led by Career Services. The connection will be made between the importance of lifelong learning and career advancement.

Self-Care Plan – Students will identify at least three challenges that they will face transitioning into the next semester. Per these challenges, they will identify at least three strategies for each of the self-care components (physical, emotional, and mental) to nurture themselves will coping with those challenges.

Dream Team Contacts - Students will identify five human resources that they would like to establish mutually supportive relationships with moving forward. Students must also reflect briefly what each individual member of his dream team brings to the table. As a part of this process students will be required to send a dream team invite to the five potential members of the team employing the DAPPS rule.

What Is Your Success Identity: 50 successes in 50 days – Over the second half of the semester students will record one daily success on index cards and at the end of the semester they will record their list of successes in the EPortfolio. This exercise will literally bring to light the notion of stacking one success on top of another success.

Late Assignment Policy

All assignments are expected to be submitted on the due date. No late assignments are accepted unless prior approval has been granted by the instructor. Before any exception is approved, a student must submit documentation that explains why late work should be accepted.

Tests (60 pts. each, 180 total pts.)

Students will take 3 tests, covering 2 chapters each. Tests will be administered online, in class. Grades will be posted in Blackboard. Students may not make up missed tests.

Switching Sections after the Drop/Add Period (even exchanges)

A student who wishes to switch sections of an Academic Advancement course after the drop/add period will furnish a written request to the Program Chair (PC) for the course. The PC will then advise the student and make a recommendation to the dean. Pending the dean's approval, the student will obtain all necessary signatures on a Change of Enrollment form.

Late Withdrawals

A student who requests a withdrawal from an Academic Advancement course following the drop date will furnish a written request and appropriate documentation to the Program Chair (PC) for the course. The PC will then advise the student and make a recommendation to the dean. Pending the dean's approval, the student will obtain all necessary signatures on a Change of Enrollment form.

No Show Withdrawals (NWs)

Absent prior contact from the student, the Academic Advancement Division will adhere to College policy without exception and advise the student of his or her options (e.g., late-start classes).

Statement of Inclusion

Ivy Tech Community College is committed to a diverse and inclusive educational environment that extends beyond tolerance to respect and affirm human difference. Therefore, diversity as defined by Ivy Tech includes, but is not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, regional and national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, disability, political affiliation, and educational background. In guiding students toward success in their career and educational goals, the Academic Advancement Division will create safe spaces for students to learn and interact respectfully, thoughtfully, and creatively in diverse settings.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana highly values academic integrity. Any student caught cheating on any class-related activity will receive no credit for that assignment. Students who assist others in such dishonesty will also be disciplined. The instructor may choose to take additional disciplinary actions.

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated under any circumstances. It is a serious offense that is not limited to the educational setting. Please refer to the Academic Integrity section of the student handbook for a detailed explanation of the college's policy on cheating and plagiarism.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines plagiarism as: a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as your own work. The act of plagiarizing is taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own.

Copyright Statement

Students shall adhere to the laws governing the use of copyrighted materials. They must insure that their activities comply with fair use and in no way infringe on the copyright or other proprietary rights of others and that the materials used and developed at Ivy Tech Community College contain nothing unlawful, unethical, or libelous and do not constitute any violation of any right of privacy.

Classroom Behavior

Students are expected to demonstrate adult, respectful behavior during class time. Instructors will set specific expectations. No food or drinks are allowed in the classroom. Cell phones must be silenced. Following these guidelines will help promote a positive atmosphere for learning. Offensive, disrespectful, and/or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Students who violate this policy will be dismissed from the course.

ADA Statement:

Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with documented disabilities. If you need an accommodation

because of a documented disability, please contact the Office of Disability Support Services.

IVYT111 Student Success in University

Transfer

(F.O.C.U.S. Course for African American/Black Males)

Contact Information

Instructor Name: J T
Office/Campus Location: Glick Technology Building-RM 131 (Academic Advising Office-Please Check In at Front Desk FIRST!)
Office Hours: Mon - Fri: 9AM - 5PM

Department Chair
C M
Office/Campus Location: NMC400

Ivy Tech Technical Support: Help Desk

Phone: 1-888-IVY-LINE (1-888-489-5463), select option 4
Student Help Center: <http://ivytech.edusupportcenter.com> (Links to an external site.)
Submit a Help Ticket: <https://helpdesk.ivytech.edu/SelfService/Create.html>

Ivy Tech Online Learning Support

Name: S M
Office: North Meridian, IFC Building
Office Hours: M-F, 9am - 5pm

Disabilities Support Contact

Regional DSS: <http://ivytech.edu/dss/>

Required Text & Materials

Title: On Course, Study Skills Plus
Author: Skip Downing
Edition: 3rd Edition
Publisher: Cengage
ISBN: 9781337060554

[Recommendations for Book Ordering \(click on this link for more info\)](#)

Course Outline of Record

COURSE TITLE: Student Success in University Transfer

COURSE NUMBER: IVYT 111

PREREQUISITES: None

SCHOOL: Liberal Arts and Sciences

PROGRAM: Liberal Arts and Sciences

CREDIT HOURS: 1

CONTACT HOURS: Lecture: 1

DATE OF LAST REVISION: Spring, 2015

EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS REVISION: Fall, 2015

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: This course provides students with an overview of skills and strategies necessary to successfully complete a degree or certificate from Ivy Tech Community College and to transfer to a four-year institution. Students focus on developing an individualized transfer plan focused on reaching their educational, career, and life objectives.

MAJOR COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Upon successful completion of this course the student will be expected to:

1. Increase self-awareness of personality type and learning-style and demonstrate the ability to take personal responsibility by creating personal and educational goals.
2. Explore various career options and demonstrate understanding of goal setting by creating career goals.

3. Develop computer literacy skills and understand basic computer functions including the ability to send and receive e-mails, usage of institutional web sites, internet search engines, and technology for research, such as library resources
4. Locate and utilize a variety of resources on and off campus, including navigating the college infrastructure, advising, financial offices, and various other academic and student support services
5. Explore the college's social environment and demonstrate understanding of the impact of diversity.
6. Develop effective application of study skills such as note taking, listening, textbook usage, test preparation, concentration, memory skills, and time management.
7. Explore and apply critical and creative thinking strategies.
8. Examine personal and wellness issues and develop stress management strategies.
9. Understand the single articulation pathways at Ivy Tech and how they support the student's transfer plan.
10. Examine transfer opportunities through campus visits or on-line research.

COURSE CONTENT: Topical areas of study include: campus orientation, time management techniques, utilizing technology, evaluation of Internet resources, goal setting, information integrity, career and major exploration, library skills, personality types, learning strategies, test taking strategies, diversity in society, note taking, textbook usage, proactive strategies, health and wellness issues, degree requirements, Core Transfer Library, General Education Transfer Core, college entrance essays

College Policies & Support Services (click on this link to review)

Students are strongly encourage to click the link above to review standard College policies and information on academic support services.

Course Policies & Procedures

Instructional Method

Each week's assignments and readings are summarized on the calendar, accessed from the Calendar button in IvyLearn. It takes a great deal of discipline, self-motivation, and effective time management skills to successfully complete an online course. Many students find it helpful to set aside specific times each week to work on course assignments.

Grades

All grades will be maintained in IvyLearn's online grade book. Students are responsible for tracking their progress by referring to the online grade book. Students can generally expect to receive grades and feedback within seven days of the assignment due date. If exceptions occur, the instructor may notify students of changes to this expectation.

Due Dates & Deadlines

The Syllabus and Calendar are two important tools to help students understand the course, student and instructor expectations, and deadlines. Both tools can be found in IvyLearn. The Calendar can be accessed from the main navigation area on the left-hand side of IvyLearn.

Students are required to submit work on time for a chance to receive credit. Deadlines for each week/assignment are summarized on the calendar. Students should check the calendar frequently for deadlines and to be aware of what to expect next. Deadlines are listed in Eastern Time and are subject to change.

Students are responsible for timely assignment submission. Should a computer system or network go down, students must still turn in work in a timely manner. Don't wait until the last minute. Plan ahead by seeking alternative means for submitting work before it is due. Local libraries and all Ivy Tech Community College campuses can serve as alternative resources. Contact the closest/most convenient campus or other public lab for schedules and Internet availability. Not having access to the required software on a home or work computer is **not** a legitimate excuse for turning in homework late.

Make-Up Policy

Late assignments will be assigned a grade of "0" unless a student has received prior approval from the professor. If a student has a problem or scheduling conflict that prevents the student from submitting an assignment on time, the student should contact the professor immediately. The professor will determine if the seriousness of the problem warrants an extension on the assignment. Unless absolutely unavoidable, students need to contact their instructor ***before*** missing the deadline – not after. Instructors have the right to decline accepting work for any credit after a deadline passes with a few specific exceptions, including but not limited to:

If there is an outage of the IvyLearn system that is verified by central system administrators, instructors will provide an extension for students to submit work at no penalty.

If the student has documentation of serious illness or death of a family member, instructors will work with the student to determine an alternate deadline.

Attendance Policy – Don't Get Dropped from Class!

Class Participation: Attending this class and your other college classes regularly and on time is vital to your success in college. Therefore, you are expected to arrive in class on time and prepared to actively participate in every class. Late arrival and early departure from class is a disruption to the academic process in college and is strongly discouraged. If you must be late or leave early, please discuss your situation with your Instructor and arrive or leave the classroom quietly.

Remember you have made a significant commitment to yourself, your classmates, and your professors to be involved in the classes for which you have enrolled. Students who are present and participate are best able to learn; those who regularly attend class, come prepared on time, and participate are also in the best position to demonstrate what they have learned. Failure to attend and participate in class will negatively impact your success and grade. College requires commitment. If you are falling behind due to conflicts outside of school it is up to you to notify your Instructor.

No Show Withdrawals (NWs): Absent prior contact from the student, the Foundations of Success Department will adhere to College policy without exception and advise the student of his or her options (e.g., late-start classes).

Attendance Drop Deadline: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2017 – Eastern Time. Students not in attendance on day one of the course are dropped for non-attendance.

Last Day to Withdraw

If a student wishes to withdraw from this course, students are responsible for completing an official withdrawal form with the registrar. Your local registrar contact information can be looked up here: <http://www.ivytech.edu/registrar/>.

Course Communication

Online Communication Etiquette

Students are expected to uphold their responsibilities in terms of appropriate and professional communication with faculty and peers. Please review the 'Students Rights and Responsibilities' section of the student handbook (located within Campus Connect) and review common netiquette (Internet etiquette) practices, like those found at: <https://www.ivytech.edu/online/11570.html>

Instructor Commitment

Ivy Tech Community College instructors are committed to responding to students' written inquiries sent via the conversations tool in IvyLearn (instructions below), within 36 hours, including weekends. Students can contact their local Online Technologies Support with questions (<http://ivytech.edu/online/contacts.html>).

University and Transfer Division Inclusion Statement

The University and Transfer Division acknowledges our shared humanity and the dignity and inherent worth of all people. By committing to an inclusive learning environment where all persons are respected, we enhance the value of the college experience.

Conversations

All students must use the conversations feature of IvyLearn for course-related communications. Using conversations, students can send and receive messages from within IvyLearn. Conversations can *only* be sent and received from within IvyLearn. Please check Conversations frequently.

For information on how to access Conversations (send and receive) [click this link to open the Canvas Guides \(https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2666\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#)Links to an external site.. The Canvas Guides will provide you with the necessary information to get started with conversations within IvyLearn.

Notifications

IvyLearn has a robust notification system that students can opt to use to receive course notifications for many course activities and events such as new announcements, due dates, and grade updates. Students can receive those notifications via many different channels including text messages and are highly encouraged to customize their notifications. To learn more about notifications and how to setup and customize notifications, please review the guide here: <https://guides.instructure.com/m/4152/1/73162-how-do-i-set-my-notification-preferences> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.

Assignments & Grading

How is my grade calculated?

Self-Inventory Pre-Test and Post-Test (10 Points each)

The self-inventory at the beginning of the course will identify current beliefs and behaviors regarding the principles of student success. The Post-Test scores from taking

the self-inventory at the end of the course will be compared to Pre-Test scores to identify areas of growth and areas for ongoing development.

Quizzes (10 points each)

There will be 4 quizzes throughout the course that cover the reading material. Quizzes can include multiple choice, true/false, and short answer. Students may not make up missed quizzes.

Projects (40 points each)

There are 4 projects in the course each worth 40 points.

Project A – Attitudes and Ambitions, Chapters 1-3

Project B – Behaviors, Chapters 4-5

Project C – Cultures & Careers, Chapters 5-7

Project D – Development & Discovery, Chapters 7-9

These projects all connect chapter reading with real life experiences and often times build on each other and overlap. Students will be asked to plot their academic goals, reflect on how being involved in the community and networking is beneficial, as well as describing how successfully interacting with others and being culturally aware is an employable skill. These projects also ask students to visualize putting lessons learned in the classroom into action at a potential work place. Projects are time intensive reflections requesting students engage in the classroom, at the college and through their educational journey.

Course Breakdown (Assessments & Assignments)

Self-Inventory Pre-Test – 10 points

Self-Inventory Post-Test – 10 points

Projects – 40 points each (4)

Quizzes – 10 points each (4)

Participation – 80 points total (10 points per class)

Total = 300 points

Grading Scale

90% - 100%	A	269-300 Points
80% - 89%	B	239-268 Points
70% - 79%	C	209-238 Points
60% - 69%	D	179-208 Points
Below 60%	F	178 and below

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D. (2011). Turning the tide: Five years of Achieving the Dream in community colleges.

CURRICULUM VITAE

John Cleo Turner

Education

Urban Education Studies PhD – March 2021

Indiana University degree earned at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

MS - Student Affairs and Higher Education – May 2007

Indiana State University

BS - Electronics Technology, minor in Political Science – May 2005

Indiana State University

Professional Experience

College Success Coordinator

Center for Leadership Development, August 2018 – May 2020

- Cultivated partnerships with 26 CLD college and university partners connecting scholarship and college admissions opportunities with potential CLD Scholars, who are rising top Senior High School students applying for College Admission. Scholarship offers for CLD Scholars were near \$4 Million dollars in 2019 and \$3.5 Million in 2020. Managed the CLD Scholars Advising Summer Advising Meetings and assisted them with financial aid, transfer assistance, retention efforts, and connected them with on-campus resources.
- Supervised part-time & full-time program assistant staff along with managed online platforms such as Zoom for the CLD Center's staff and program participants. Created Workshops and Webinars (virtually through Zoom and in-person) connecting students and parents to college and career opportunities.

- Coordinated & created in-person and virtual curriculum for the Emerging Scholar Day (300-600 parents & students involved) and College Prep Program (100-200 parents & students involved) for 10th, 11th, & 12th grade students.
- Collaborated with CLD Staff in assisting with programs and events such as College Prep Conference and College Fair and Minority Achievers Awards and Scholarship Gala. Also created MOUs and SOPs for community connections, programs, and initiatives that happen at CLD.

Assistant Director of Academic Advising and Foundations of Success Adjunct Faculty
Ivy Tech Community College, April 2011 – March 2020

- Advised Ivy Tech Community College students for the School of Business, Information Technology/Computing & New Student Advising in their majors for the Downtown Indianapolis & Indianapolis Lawrence Campuses
- Assisted students with Enrollment, Transfer Credits, & Commuter services. Presented students with information for class registration, registrar assistance, financial aid, & enrollment testing. Sat on hiring & program committees & adjudicated student conduct cases along with creating behavioral interventions
- Worked as an Adjunct Professor & taught First Year IVYT Courses. Taught the first IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Course exclusively for Black males. Created IVYT F.O.C.U.S. Curriculum for affinity sections for Black Male course. Co-Created the Male Empowerment Summer Bridge Program & Male College Readiness Summit. Worked as an Ivy Tech Basketball Game Announcer at Ivy Tech Community College – Indianapolis
Assistant Manager – Store #1435 – Downtown Indianapolis
The Sherwin Williams Company, November 2009 – April 2011

- Managed a 1.3 million dollar/yr. commercial store. Managed daily opening and closing operations, filed operations paperwork, called potential paint clients, and assisting customer service needs to all residential and commercial customers
- Supervised 3 Part-Time employees, also handled store and employee safety matters and regulation

Presentations

- Topic: What is a Community College? – Spring 2018
- Topic: Critical Race Theory Course Presentation – Fall 2017
- Topic: A Critical Discussion Exploring Indianapolis Charter Schools – Spring 2017
- Topic: Mentoring 101 – Spring 2017
- Topic: The PhD Black Male View - Fall 2016 and Spring 2017
- Topic: A Change in FOCUS for African American Males – Spring 2016
- Topic: Diversity Issues in K-12 Education - Spring 2016
- Topic: “Got GUMPTION?” Cultivating Minority Male Success In Higher Education – Spring 2016
- Topic: What Is Your P.A.S.S.I.O.N.? – Fall 2015
- Topic: Student Affairs: Increasing Retention and Persistence of First Year Minority Male Students – Spring 2014

Publications

- A Model for Male Success: Ivy Tech Community College Indianapolis Male Empowerment Summer Bridge Program – Summer 2018
- Living Education eMagazine – Forest of the Rain Productions – Volume XX

https://issuu.com/livingeducationemagazine/docs/2018_leem_summer_edition_gg

Decolonizing Research - Interviews & Observations of Kheprw Institute's Community & Organizational Culture – Fall 2017-Spring 2018 <http://kheprw.org/iupui-urban-education-studies/>

The Ph.D. Black Male View – Three African American Males in Three Doctoral Programs as Ph.D. Students in the State of Indiana – Fall 2017

Living Education eMagazine – Forest of the Rain Productions – Volume XIX

https://issuu.com/livingeducationemagazine/docs/leem_2017_fall_edition_a4

“Got GUMPTION?” Cultivating Students & Professionals of Color Success in Higher Education.

Living Education eMagazine – Forest of the Rain Productions – Seventh Edition – Fall 2016

https://issuu.com/livingeducationemagazine/docs/leem_fall_special_2016_29_vol2__fin

Do You Love What You Do as a Black Educator in Higher Ed?

Diverse Issues in Higher Education Op-Ed – Published May 19, 2016

<http://diverseeducation.com/article/84378/>

Your Black Education Website Article Contributor – October 2015 - December 2015

<http://yourblackeducation.com/author/john-turner/>

Ivy Tech Community College – Central Indiana's Efforts to Educate and Empower Black Males.

Living Education eMagazine - Forest of the Rain Productions – Tenth Edition - Summer

2014 - https://issuu.com/livingeducationemagazine/docs/summer_leem_2014_draft_16

Conferences

AABHE National Conference (Session Presenter and Education Social Coordinator) –

March 24- 27, 2019 – Indianapolis, Indiana

Men of Excellence Conference (Keynote Speaker) – Ivy Tech Community College – Fort

Wayne – Friday, November 2, 2018

Engaging Inclusion Conference (Poster Presentation Presenter – Family as Faculty

Project) IUPUI/Down Syndrome Indiana/IN*SOURCE - Indianapolis, IN – April 28,

2018

Indiana Association of Blacks in Higher Education – Friday, October 6, 2017, Indiana

State University & October 10, 2016, The University of Notre Dame

Critical Race Studies in Education Association Annual Conference (Hospitality

Committee Member & Session Chair) - May 31 – June 2, 2017

Minority Male Student Engagement Conference – Friday, May 12, 2017

AERA Annual Conference & Society of Professors of Education Meeting (SPE &

RFBE/Black SIG Member) - Apr 8–12, 2016: Washington DC, Apr 28–May 1, 2017: San

Antonio H. Kent Weldon Conference for Higher Education – Tuesday, April 4, 2017

NASPA National Conference – March 13 – 16, 2016 Indianapolis, IN

Ivy Tech Community College – Central Indiana Student Affairs Professional

Development Day – March 11, 2016

Black and Latino Male Summit – March 5, 2016 - University of Illinois Champaign-

Urbana

Ivy Tech Community College – Central Indiana Professional Development Day –

October 23, 2015

NACADA Regional Conference – April 9 & 10, 2015

Awards and Grants

Elite 50 – Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) - April 2018

Graduate and Professional Educational Grant – IUPUI - (\$500) – January 2018

White Belt Certification – Ivy Tech Community College – January 2018

Social Science Education Consortium - Nicholas and Suzanne Helburn Young Scholars

Award (\$1,000) – October 2017

The National Society of Leadership and Success, Ivy Tech Community College - Central

Indiana Sigma Alpha Pi Chapter Excellence In Teaching Award – April 2017

Block Grant Travel Funding – IUPUI - (January 2016 - \$1,000 to AERA Washington

DC; February 2017 - \$1,000 to AERA San Antonio)

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. – Indianapolis Alumni Chapter – March 2007

Ronald E. McNair Scholar – Indiana State Univ. (2002), Indiana Univ. Bloomington

(2003), IUPUI (2004)