ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Experiences of successful black males at a Hispanic

serving community college

Jonelle B.A. Knox, Doctor of Education, May 2017

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Community College Leadership

This qualitative collective case study sought to understand experiences of

Black males who successfully graduated from a northeast Hispanic serving

community college. The overarching question that guided this study was: How do

the experiences of Black male students who participated in a male initiative program

at Pinewood Community College differ from those of Black males who did not?

Padilla et al.'s (1997) local model of successful minority students (LMSMS)

was used as the conceptual framework to guide this study. The study explored the

experiences of 10 Black men at a Hispanic-serving community college who

successfully overcame barriers and successfully graduated. The participants were

broken into two groups, five black males who participated in a minority male initiative

program and five Black males who did not participate in a minority male initiative

program. Data were collected utilizing in-depth semi-structure interviews.

The findings from analysis revealed that: 1) Black males at the Hispanic serving community college faced both internal and external barriers that impeded their persistence to graduation, 2) student engagement with similar peers and cohort programs improved persistence and graduation of Black males, 3) Black males who developed and created an internal "family" that encompassed faculty, peers, and staff at the institution were able to persist to graduation, and 4) the lack of organization at the institution was a barrier that Black males had to overcome to successfully persist to graduation.

EXPERIENCES OF SUCCESSFUL BLACK MALES AT A

HISPANIC SERVING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Jonelle B.A. Knox

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

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Has been approved

May 2017

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and mentors whose love and support made this possible. Special thanks to my Granny, Doris Anderson, who has always prayed for me and loved me unconditionally — "Granny I Love You". To Yasmin, Mekhi, Marshall, Mason, Aiden, Kelsey, Kayla, and Maya: this dissertation proves that through God, all things are possible!

I further dedicate this to the memory of my Brother, Anthony W. Suggs Jr., you passed in the middle of this accomplishment but your spirit is always with me. Last, I would like to dedicate this dedication to my Great-Grandmother, Rosa Stewart, Gramps, Marshall F. Knox, and God-Mother, Addie Rogers — you were life-long educators who paved the way for others to earn an education and I now I continue the mission.

Acknowledgments

I could not have accomplished this without the support of my family (biological and extended), friends, mentors, and colleagues. To those that I do not mention, please understand that it is not intentional and I am forever grateful. First, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Rosemary Gillett-Karam, co-chair, Dr. Henry Linck, and committee member, Dr. Gwendolyn Joseph. From the meetings in Baltimore to the countless calls we had to discuss my progress, I will forever be appreciative of your patience, assistance, and guidance. Dr. Linck, I look forward to continuing to receive the annual family newsletter as I now feel like I am a part of your family. Dr. Joseph, thank you for the last minute review requests and your input that helped me to complete this process.

Dr. Prime, I thank you for always taking my phone calls when I was frustrated and ready to give up. Furthermore, I thank you for the suggestions and recommendations that made this dissertation something I am proud of.

Drs. Bondima, Woodland, Parsons, Anderson, "B". Williams, and Spells-Fentry, thank you, thank you, and I thank you! I made a "special connection" to each of you and through your assistance and support, "I made it".

To the UMOCI and non-UMOCI participants, thank you for sharing your experiences. I hope that your experiences will be utilized as a catalyst for other Black males' to be successful at Hispanic serving community colleges. Audrey, Malcolm, Jaleel, Quinton, and Nahdia, "Knox" thanks you for *all* of your support, it means more than you will ever know.

To my cohort 35 and 36 classmates, although I am the first in the cohort to complete this daunting task, I want to thank you for your love, support, and assistance. I look forward to the day that *we* can all be called "Doctor"! Special thanks goes out to my program classmates, Ja'Ken, John, Joevanne, Tamara, Deloris, Angela, Tisa, Kani, and Maurice – you know I would not have made it without you!

To my mentors: Attorney Lewis Myers Jr., Dr. Charlene Newkirk, and Attorney Kenneth Silver thank you for your mentorship and continued guidance. Your time, experience, and love helped make this possible. I hope that my accomplishment makes your proud. Charmaine Harvey, my special friend, you have encouraged me, listened to me, guided me, supported me, and been more than a friend. I can never put into words how much I love and thank you. This accomplishment would have *never* been made without you. I am eternally grateful!

To the members of the "Drs. Club", Larry Johnson, Porter Brannon, Juanita Catchings, Jonathan Lightfoot, Jim Freeman – Thank you for listening to my pain and guiding me through. I am the newest member!

I would like to give a special thanks and acknowledgement to scholars including Drs. Mason, Wood, Harris, Strayhorn, Harper, Bell, and Ingrim who have conducted research on Black Males' journey in higher education. You have and continue to inspire me. Thank you for caring enough to have done (and continue) to do this work. I hope my work, like yours, will help to continue the movement!

Last, but not least, I would like to thank all of my family and friends for understanding when I had to miss your special events to accomplish my personal

goal. I hope that my accomplishment shows you that it was not intentional, but was

necessary for this to be completed in three and a half years.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

The community college was created with the purpose and mission of providing access to higher education in the United States. Since the opening in 1901 of Joliet Junior College in Illinois, the first public two-year college (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013), that mission has evolved into providing higher education for students who might not otherwise be able to obtain post-secondary education. Today, community college leaders are under great pressure to increase student persistence and graduation rates.

In 2009, President Obama proposed The American Graduation Initiative that established goals to increase the number of community college graduates by five million by 2020 (Whitehouse, 2009). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the primary advocacy association for community colleges in the United States, agreed that the goal of increasing the number of community college graduates by 2020 could be accomplished; however, the AACC indicated that in order for that goal to be achieved, community colleges will would have to redesign their students' educational experiences (AACC, 2012). As part of that redesign, the AACC suggests that community colleges publicly commit to explicit goals for college completion, create pathways for each student, expand prior-learning assessments, devise completion strategies on both ends of the college experience, establish goals for seamless transfer, and implement automatic graduation reverse transfer programs (AACC, 2012).

Over time, the demographics of community college students have changed (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013). Today, community colleges educate a diverse population of students who are: full-and part-time, minorities, single parents, low income, unemployed, academically unprepared, and currently and formerly incarcerated people (AACC, 2016).

One population of students who enroll in community colleges in large numbers is Black men (Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), 2014). In fact, Bush and Bush (2010) indicated that community colleges serve as the primary point of entry into postsecondary education for Black men. In 2014, 570,080 Black men were enrolled in community colleges (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2016). The vast majority of Black males enrolled in community colleges attend institutions without a specific designation or population served. According to IPEDS (2016), in 2014, 470,267 (82.5%) of the 570,080 Black males were enrolled in public community colleges that do not have a specific designation or population served (IPEDS, 2016).

Although more than 570,000 Black men enrolled in community colleges in 2014, many may never attain a certificate or Associate's degree. Harris, Wood, and Newman (2015) found that nearly 70% of Black men begin their academic careers in community colleges, but 68% of Black men who start college do not graduate within six years (Harper, 2006). Scholars have conducted research studies in an attempt to discover why Black men enter community colleges in large numbers yet drop- or stop-out in large numbers (Mason, 1998; Wood, 2012). Results of research suggest that some barriers faced by successful Black male college students include:

discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resources (Padilla, Trevino, Trevino & Gonzalez, 1997). This study was conducted to explore barriers faced by Black males at a Hispanic serving community college (HSCC) and how they over-came such barriers to successfully graduate. Padilla et al. (1997) was used as the conceptual framework to guide this research; his study focused on discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resource barriers faced by Black male community college students who persisted to graduation at a Hispanic serving community college. Peer and student support programs and initiatives have provided pathways for Black male college students to attain academic success (Flowers, 2006; Strayhorn, 2011). Hargrove (2014), for example, found that Black males regard support programs and contact with institutional agents as a "supportive nurturing milieu" to their success at a Hispanic serving institution. It is the intention of this researcher to gather first-hand evidence from Black males attending an HSI to aid in determining the experiences of black males in a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution (HSI).

Conceptual Framework

Padilla et al. (1997) developed the local model of successful minority students (LMSMS) that was used as the conceptual framework for this study. LMSMS is a further development of Padilla's (1991, 1994) expertise model of successful college students, focusing on the actions and learned knowledge of students who successfully overcame barriers (discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resource barriers), while completing college. Padilla's (1991,1994), earlier "*expertise model* focused on knowledge successful students possess and the

actions they employ to overcome barriers" (p. 126). Furthermore, the expertise model of successful college students indicated that "all students enter college with some level of theoretical and practical knowledge [and] suggests that successful college students are those who are in effect *experts* at being successful as students at a specific college or university" (p. 126). As Padilla points out, "Upon arrival on campus and throughout their tenure as students, they are challenged by the institution to demonstrate increasing levels of theoretical knowledge before they can be awarded a degree. Such knowledge is typically acquired through courses and demonstrated through performance on tests or other formal assessment procedures" (Padilla et al., 1997, p. 126). Padilla's early focus on Hispanic males in colleges centered on engagement issues and not on how students overcame barriers; this model was then redeveloped as a "local" model to determine constraints or barriers such students encountered in addition to the more formal knowledge students encountered in the "expertise model"—sometimes referred to as the formal model— which inquired about institutional concerns of students. The new local model focused on "informal" issues instead and became the *informal model*—seeking to determine whether informal institutional practices had effects on minority students.

The local model of successful minority students advanced Padilla's (1991, 1994) expertise model of successful students utilizing identified barriers faced by successful students and narrowly focused on minority students' success at a specific campus. According to Padilla et al. (1997) the local model of successful minority students "was designed to reveal the strategies that successful minority students employ to overcome barriers to academic success in college" (p.125). Padilla et al.

(1997) wanted to "[assess] the informal knowledge [that is] required by minority students to succeed in a specific campus" (p.125). Padilla et al. (1997) further indicated that a local model also could identify the heuristic, or formal knowledge associated with successful degree completion on a specific campus. Reference to the earlier Padilla model referred to the students' acquisition of practical knowledge concerning college requirements leading to a successful college career; the local model assumes this 'heuristic' frame but also identifies issues, problems, and roadblocks minority males may experience at an institution in which they are outnumbered by other ethnic groups, but specifically located in Hispanic serving institutions (those whose numbers support a special designation by the federal government).

In Padilla's study, the local model of successful minority students identified barriers faced by Black males including those who participated in a minority male initiative program and those who had not yet successfully earned an Associate's degree at a single Hispanic-serving community college. Furthermore, Padilla's study utilized LMSMS to understand how Black males at a single Hispanic serving community college, some of whom participated in a minority male initiative program and some who did not, overcame the identified barriers and successfully graduated. The focus of this study mirrors the "local" Padilla study inasmuch as it also looks at an HSI and the issues Black males encountered there. The local model is presented in figure 1:

Figure 1: Padilla's Local Model-LMSMS
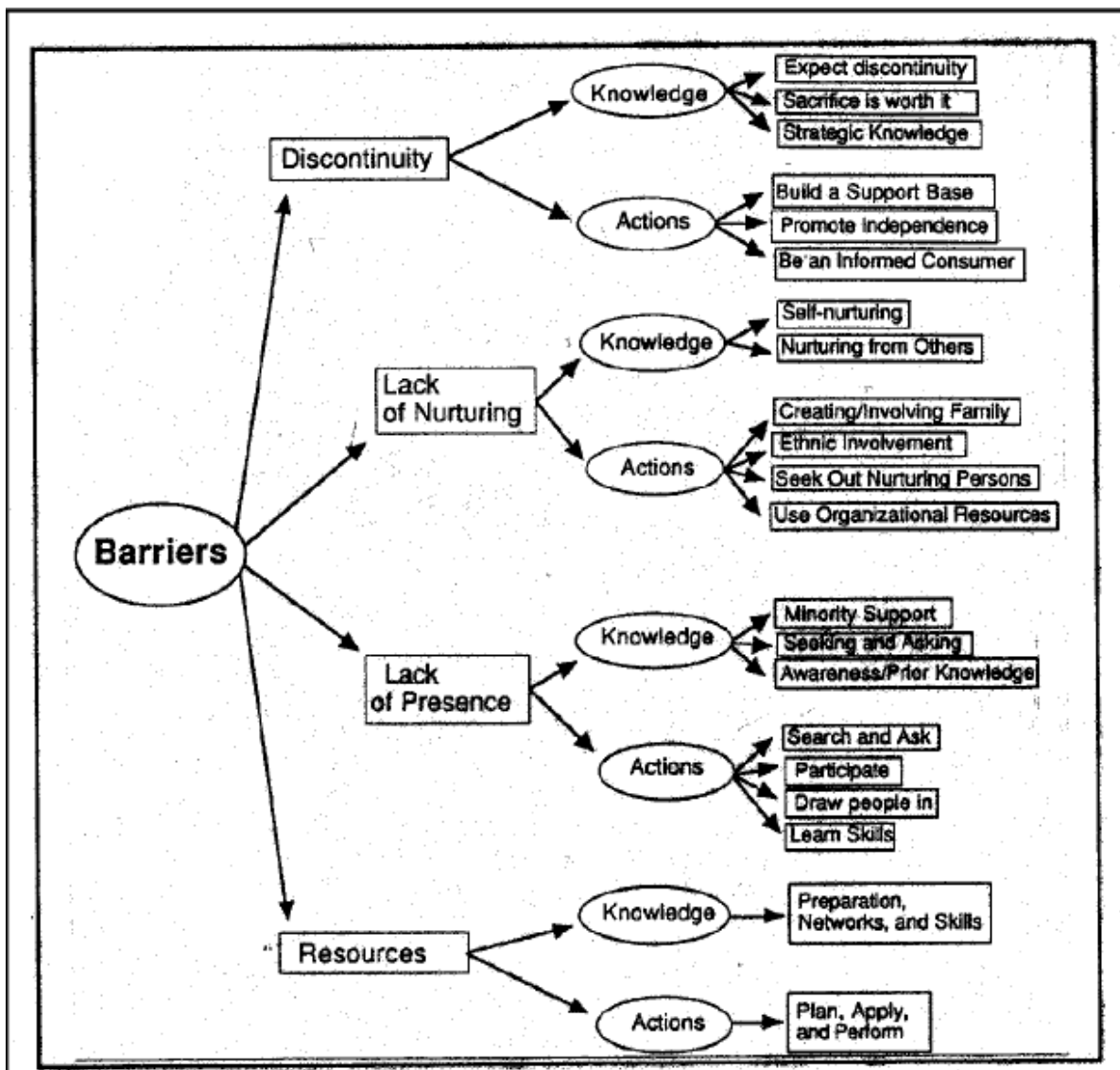
Padilla, R.V. (1999). College student retention: Focus on success. *Journal of College Student Retention* 1(2), 141.

The researcher took note of Padilla's four barriers, the knowledge and action sets and each of the explanations of participants who encountered barriers and used knowledge of the institutions to learn those requirements. Participants also determined actions to eliminate those local barriers that could endanger their college completion and graduation.

For each of the set of barriers identified, students can begin to understand and deal with barriers by identification and explanation. Willingness to confront these barriers is essential to student success, which Padilla suggests is graduation (1999). Each of these four barriers became the bases for the research questions that center on Black students attending an HSI at Pinewood College in this study. While some authors may argue that the "issues" minority males encounter in college (Strayhorn, 2011; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Saenz, 2013) relate to identity issues (which minority males encounter as "counter-culture") these same authors are, as Padilla suggests, offering new models of inclusion of these students in such institutions as they choose to attend.

As previously stated, barriers identified in LMSMS include discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resources (Padilla et al., 1997). Discontinuity barriers include obstacles that hinder "a student's smooth and continuous transition from high school to college" (Padilla et al., 1997, p. 129). Padilla et al. (1997) held that lack of nurturing barriers "dealt with the absence of supportive resources on the campus needed to facilitate the adjustment and development of minority students" (p. 131). According to Padilla et al. (1997), "Lack-of-presence barriers [are] associated with the absence of minorities in the curriculum, in the university's programs, and in the general university population of students, staff, and faculty" (p. 131). Resource barriers include students' lacking money and having difficulty associated with the financial aid system in general (Padilla et al., 1997). Utilizing Padilla's local model of successful minority students allowed this researcher to explore the experiences (discontinuity, supportive

resources, lack of nurturing, lack-of-presence barriers) of HSCC Black men who successfully graduated. In this study, it was helpful to understand how and if Black males overcame barriers which had also been identified in Padilla's et al., (1997) study. Research questions in this qualitative study capitalized on the framework used by Padilla et al. (lack of nurturing barriers). Often colleges turn to minority male initiatives and/or programs specifically designed to aid minority males to persist and graduate. This work also questions whether Black male students enrolled in an HSI encounter similar barriers of discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resources. In other words, does the type of institutional focus affect the students' success (described as graduation)?

Minority Male Initiatives

In response to the urgent need to improve Black male persistence and graduation rates at community colleges, some have established minority male initiative (MMI) programs (Watson, 2015). According to Kevin Christian, Senior Program Associate for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity at the AACC, in 2010, the AACC created a self-reported minority male student success database that lists minority male initiative programs at community colleges (K. Christian, personal communication, April 25, 2016; AACC, n. d.). Currently, there are eighty-six self-reported minority male initiative programs in the AACC minority male success database (K. Christian, personal communication, April 25, 2016). Annually, the AACC reaches out to colleges to update database contact information. However, Christian indicated that after a five-year period, nearly twenty programs decided not to report their programs because of loss of funding, leadership changes, legal issues

surrounding programs dedicated to select populations, and insufficient institutional resources.

Watson (2015) writing about "M^2C^3 [Minority Male Community College Collaborative], explained it was the first research and practice center specifically focused on advancing successful student outcomes for men of color in community colleges. It was created in 2011 and has partnered with more than forty-five community colleges in eight states" (Para. 7). Since M^2C^3's establishment, Dr. Luke Wood, M^2C^3's co-founder, indicated that partnerships have led to enhanced professional development for faculty and staff, informed interventions for programs serving men of color, and resulted in new funding for initiatives addressing challenges facing minority males (Watson, 2015).

Formal and informal networks on campus powerfully influence Black male community college students' academic success (CCCSE, 2014). Formal and informal networks are often components of MMI programs and include peers, instructors, advisors, and/or mentors (CCCSE, 2014). Black males who participate in MMI programs have demonstrated positive academic outcomes and success, certainly suggesting that programs should be replicated and expanded in new places and settings (Wimer & Bloom, 2014). MMI programs do not operate at all community colleges and reach only limited numbers of minority males enrolled in higher education. This study looked at whether a minority male initiative program played a role in Black males' successfully graduating from a single Hispanic serving community college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to examine the experiences of Black male community college graduates enrolled in a Hispanic serving community college, some of whom participated in a minority male initiative program and others who did not. Understanding the experiences of Black males who successfully complete community college was relevant because research has concluded that although Black males are the most engaged and enroll in community colleges in large numbers, they have the lowest persistence and completion rates (CCCSE, 2014). Furthermore, as Béjar (2008) indicated, because Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are the fastest-growing higher education institutions in the United States, it was important to explore and understand the experiences of Black males who successfully earned an Associate's degree at an HSI. By asking Black males, some of whom participated in a minority male initiative program and some who did not, about their experiences at a Hispanic serving community college and successfully persisted to graduation, this qualitative study may reach a thorough and in-depth understanding of what, if any, role the minority male initiative program contributed to their success.

The northeast Hispanic serving community college in this study was chosen because of its geographic location, because of its student population demographics, and because of its minority male initiative program. Historically, most research conducted at Hispanic Serving Institutions has been in the Southwest and focused on Hispanic persistence and graduation (Cuella, 2012; Marrero, 2013; Herber-Valdez, 2008). Furthermore, the ethnicity of the population studied at Southwest

HSIs has primarily been Mexican. This study is unique because it focused on examining the experiences of Black males at an HSCC. As more Black men enroll in Hispanic Serving Institutions compared to those who enroll in HBCUs and PBIs combined (IPEDS, 2016), the researcher sought to understand how successful Black males actually complete certificate and Associate's degrees at Hispanic serving community colleges. Studying Black males and understanding their experiences and especially how they overcome barriers at a Hispanic serving community college is an essential part of this study. Furthermore, it is equally important to understand what mechanisms Black males use to overcome such barriers at a Hispanic Serving Community College and successfully graduate.

The Hispanic serving community college in this study is located in a large urban northeast city and is part of a higher education system that includes community colleges, four-year colleges, a graduate center, and professional schools. Additionally, the college's student population consists of 95% minorities: 64% Hispanic, 28% Black/African American, and 3% Asian (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2014). These data reveal that a preponderance of students are Hispanic. The researcher questioned the issues of diversity in this study. The Hispanic population at the institution is comprised of students with ethnic identities connected to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and South America. The Black/African American student population is comprised of students with ethnic identities connected to all areas of the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean islands.

Research Design, General Question

General question: How do the experiences of Black male students who participated in a male initiative program at Pinewood Community College differ from those of Black males who did not?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may provide HSCC leaders useful information about programs and activities they might consider initiating at their institutions to help Black men successfully complete a certificate and/or an Associate's degree. This study differed from many others because of its geographic location, the diversity of its student population, and its focus on Black male experiences.

Previous studies of successful students and Black males have focused primarily on students attending and successfully graduating from four-year institutions (Harper, 2006; Harper, 2012; Hylton, 2013; Edwards, 2007; Palmer et al., 2014). The findings from this study may add useful information to the literature, about Black men who successfully graduated from a Northeast HSCC, information that is currently quite scarce. Furthermore, the findings may provide needed information to Hispanic serving community college leaders about the effectiveness of Black males' participation in minority male initiative programs as that participation relates to their persistence and graduation rates at HSCCs.

This research study focused on community college Black male students who were successful rather than those who have suffered failure. The results could provide information to HSCC professionals that could increase future Black male persistence and graduation rates in community colleges. Although this study

focused on Black males who successfully graduated from an HSCC, findings from the study may also provide information for other minority and underrepresented students who attend HSCCs.

Delimitations

The delimitation of this qualitative study is the selection of a Hispanic-serving community college, in a specific geographic location, in a large northeast city, and the sole population of Black males who successfully graduated from that HSCC. This institution was chosen precisely because it had a large population of Black men in a region of the United States rarely studied and because of its established minority male initiative program.

Limitations

Researchers are the primary instruments for data collection and analysis; therefore, shortcomings and biases might affect a qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). Merriam indicated that "Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data" (p. 5).

Limitations and biases identified in this study were related to the researcher as the human instrument for the data collection and analysis as well as the student participants who may have biases based on a relationship to the researcher. The researcher was previously the director of the minority male initiative program in this study. The researcher attempted to set aside personal biases and allowed collected data to emerge from the individual cases. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to reduce biases by conducting interviews via Skype or other recordable programs.

This allowed the participants' responses to be transcribed verbatim from the recorded interviews and returned to them for review before beginning the analysis of the data.

Uniqueness of the Study

This study focused on Today University System's (TUS) Urban Men of Color Initiative ("UMOCI") program established at Pinewood Community College (PCC), a TUS community college. Today University System (TUS), Pinewood Community College (PCC), and Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI) are pseudonyms utilized to keep anonymity of the system, institution, and program. PCC established the Urban Men of Color Initiative program in an effort to increase minority male persistence and graduation rates. The UMOCI program is one of thirty TUS's system-wide initiatives with the same type of focus and mission. UMOCI, offers both formal and informal programming: formal programming focuses on providing academic support services while the informal programming focuses on student engagement through student activities.

Through a collective case study approach, this study aimed to understand and compare the experiences of Black males who participated in the UMOCI program to Black males who did not participate in the program and successfully graduated from Pinewood Community College. The collective case study approach allowed for participants' individual experiences to be examined in this study. Furthermore, this study allowed black male graduates to voice their individual perspectives as to the significance and relevance, if any, that participating in the

UMOCI and other such programs had on successfully graduating from Pinewood Community College.

Definitions

African American: Participants in this study self-identify as African American/Black as their race/ethnicity according to the institution's records. Used interchangeably with *Black* to define participant's race/ethnicity.

Black: Participants in this study self-identify as African American/Black as their race/ethnicity according to the institution's records. Used interchangeably with *African American* to define participant's race/ethnicity.

Dropout: a student who leaves the college; refers only to those persons who never receive a degree from any institution of higher education (Tinto, 1993).

Graduation: a point at which a student who enters a particular educational institution earns a degree or certificate from that institution (Tinto, 2012).

Hispanic Serving Community College (HSCC): community colleges that fit the criteria established by the Department of Education for Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): a 2 or 4-year eligible institution of higher education with an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent student population that is at least 25% Hispanic at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU): higher education institutions established prior to 1964 whose principal mission was and is the education of Black Americans and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or

association determined by the Secretary [of Education] (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Pinewood Community College (PCC): Pseudonym name given to the institution in this study.

Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI): institutions that meet Title III requirements of the Higher Education Act, have an enrollment of at least 40% Black American students, and enroll more than 1,000 undergraduate students. No less than 50% of the institution's undergraduate students are low-income or first-generation college students. Additionally, students must be enrolled in an educational program leading to an Associate's or Bachelor's degree that the institution is licensed to award by the State in which it is located (U.S. Department of Education, n. d.)

Persistence: students' continued enrollment quarter after quarter or semester after semester in order to achieve their education. The term implies that students are making progress toward earning a certificate or degree at the institution (Tinto, 2012).

Stop-out: students who temporarily stop attending college and may delay their return for many years (Tinto, 1993).

Today University System (TUS): Pseudonym name given to the Northeast College District in this study.

Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI): Pseudonym name given to the Minority Male Initiative Program at Pinewood Community College during the time the student participants attended the college.

Summary

Chapter I introduced this study, indicated the problem of Black males' earning a certificate or degree from community colleges, specifically HCSSs, and information on the significance of this study and the theoretical framework used to guide the study. Chapter II provides a review of relevant literature. Chapter III presents information about the *research methodology* used. Chapter IV presents *findings* of this study. Chapter V provides a discussion, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to present the current scholarly understanding of Black male community college students' persisting in and graduating from higher education institutions. Each section emphasizes pertinent literature related to this topic and provides information about its relationship to Black male college students. The first section provides in-depth information about the characteristics and trends of Black men in community colleges. The second section provides general information about minority male initiative programs in community colleges. Additionally, the second section details the district-wide and campus-specific minority male program selected for this study. The next section highlights mentorship of collegiate Black men followed by a section that discusses Black males at Hispanic Serving Institutions. Finally, information is provided on barriers faced by successful collegiate Black men.

Characteristics and Trends of Black Men in Community Colleges

Black males have historically been more likely to start their postsecondary education at a community college (Edwards, 2007; Lee & Ransom, 2011; Palmer et al., 2014). Research indicates that there has been a decline in the number of Black men enrolled in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Warde, 2008; Irby, 2012). At the same time there has been a steady increase in Black men enrolling in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) (*Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System* (IPEDS), 2016). Warde (2008) cited poverty and high tuition costs as two of the reasons for decreased Black male enrollment at PBIs and HBCUs. Furthermore, Hurtado and

Ruiz (2012) indicated that institutions that are adaptive and responsive to changes in Black student enrollments are marked by supportive external conditions, internal patterns supporting changes, and strong leadership…" (p. 10). While there is an increase in Black male enrollment in HSIs, there is no published research definitively explaining this new phenomenon.

There are significant differences between Black male community college students and their four-year counterparts (Flowers, 2006). According to Wood and Williams (2013), "Black men in community college are more likely to be older, be classified as low-income, have dependents (e.g., children), be married, and have delayed their enrollment in higher education" (p. 3). They are more likely to have attended public schools and less likely to have completed college preparatory courses in foreign language, mathematics, and science (Wood, 2011; Palmer et al., 2014). Palmer et al. (2014) indicated that, overall, 67.7% of Black collegians and 71.8% of Black community college students are first-generation college attendees.

Sparks and Malkus (2013) administered a self-reported survey of first-year students enrolled in developmental (also called 'remedial') courses. The survey resulted in 28% of first-year Black male college students' reporting that they were enrolled in remedial courses (Sparks & Malkus, 2013). According to Michael Bohlig, Senior Research Analyst at the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), 75%-80% of Black men enter community colleges with remedial course needs (M. Bohlig, personal communication, February 22, 2016).

Research conducted in 2014 by the CCCSE, an organization that produces new information about community college quality and performance, concluded that

Black male community college students agree on four key points: personal

connections, high expectations, instructor quality, and engagement, all of which

mattered to their success in college (CCCSE, 2014). According to the CCCSE's

(2014) study "Students consistently refer to the power of having strong relationships

– a formal or informal network on campus that includes peers, instructors, advisors,

and/or mentors" (p. 8). CCCSE further indicated that a recurring theme related to

personal connection was mentioned during interviews by study participants that

included "the value of someone who believes in me, someone the student respects

and who makes time when the student needs help" (CCCSE, 2014, p. 8). Further,

they found that Black male community college students saw value in on-campus

diversity and the presence of more faculty and staff of color (CCCSE, 2014). The

CCCSE longitudinal study asserted that Black males in community colleges were the

most engaged in comparison with other men enrolled in community colleges

(CCCSE, 2014).

Gardenhire-Crooks et al., (2010) observed that Black males who have regular

engagement with faculty, staff, and other students are more likely to persist and

reach their academic goals. Swail, Redd, & Perna, (2003) indicated that two of the

most recognized methods of integration are making new friendships and peer

interactions.

Wood and Turner (2011) conducted interviews with Black male community

college students and found that participants "who received attention from faculty

members felt more positive about their relationships with them [faculty] and as a

result, experienced greater engagement with faculty inside and outside the

classroom" (Bauer, 2014, p. 158). Furthermore, Wood and Turner's study found that participants commonly referred to elements of faculty-student engagement as friendliness, encouragement, checking-in, listening to concerns, and monitoring school performance. Grant (2013) suggested that "high levels of institutional support, close contact with faculty mentors, and campus activity involvement all positively impact success rates for Black male collegians" (para. 4).

According to Klopfenstein (2005), "Culturally similar teachers may take more interest in mentoring Black students and have more credibility with those students" (p.2). Furthermore Klopfenstein stated. "Black teachers may have higher expectations for and interact more positively with Black students than other teachers thereby increasing the motivation and self-esteem Black students need to take on challenges of rigorous coursework (p.4).

Black males who experience academic distress in community colleges are described as from low socio-academic background, minimal academic achievement, and having generally low self-concept (Tyler, Sterling, & Grays, 2013). Some Black men who face low socio-economic conditions drop-out of community colleges after demonstrating average and above-average academic abilities; "yet, they make the decision to discontinue their education in most institutions of higher learning" (Tyler et al., 2013, para. 3). Tyler et al. further indicates, the nuclear family, peer groups, community, family-friend system, and the school itself are significant influences on Black males' decision to persist in community college after demonstrating average and above-average academic abilities.

Black males enrolled in higher educational institutions continue to be described negatively as *dysfunctional* (Majors & Billson, 1992), *at-risk* (Bailey & Moore, 2004), *developmentally disadvantaged* (Cooley, Cornell, & Lee, 1991), *uneducable* (Ferguson, 2000), *enraged* (Hooks, 2004), and an *endangered species* (Gibbs, 1988; Parham & McDavis, 1987). According to Strayhorn (2010), such negative connotations undermine the academic performance and success of Black men.

Engagement for Black males entering community colleges is not always easy or automatic, and they often feel unwelcome (Garenhire-Crooks et al., 2010). Many Black male students on community college campuses do not make friends with other students on-campus and often regard a *friend* as someone who could distract them from reaching their goals (Garenhire-Crooks et al., 2010). In contrast, some Black male community college students who indicate a lack of interest in making friends would like to have more opportunities to engage in such extracurricular activities as use of the campus gymnasium and basketball courts and to participate in support groups designed specifically for them. According to Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003), "There are [*sic*] a variety of ways that students actually 'fit' into the college environment, and also a number of ways that the college can assist in that integration" (p. 48).

CUNY Black Male Initiative

As part of this study, the researcher examined City Universities of New York's (CUNY) Black Male Initiative program. To address issues of low enrollment of minority males in higher education, the City Universities of New York (CUNY)

established its University Task Force on the Black Male Initiative ("BMI") in 2004. The goal of the University Task Force was to improve the enrollment and/or graduation rates of students from under-represented groups, particularly Black males (CUNY-BMI, 2015). Through New York City Council funding, fifteen BMI projects were established on CUNY's two- and four-year college campuses in 2005. Additional BMI funding was provided to CUNY by the New York City Council to increase opportunities for people without a high school diploma. The purpose of this funding was specifically to increase enrollment in GED courses, provide support for formerly incarcerated men to enroll in college, and survey workforce development opportunities. Currently, CUNY operates more than thirty projects in its mission to "increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of students from groups that are severely under-represented in higher education, in particular African, African American/Black, Caribbean, and Latino/Hispanic males" (CUNY - BMI, 2015, para 1).

CUNY BMI campus programs currently have three key components: diversity recruitment, structured mentoring, and academic programming (CUNY – BMI, 2015). Furthermore, current goals of the BMI program include: increasing the enrollment and matriculation of under-represented students, increasing retention and graduation rates of under-represented students, and improving the overall grade point average of under-represented students.

The structure of the CUNY BMI program involves both advisor-to-advisee and peer-to-peer mentorship. According to CUNY BMI (2015),

This [structured mentorship] enables each student to get specific academic supports that have been the bedrock of CUNY BMI's success over the last 10 years. In our model, the advisor can be a peer, an administrator or a faculty member. Our most effective version of mentoring is our Peer to Peer mentoring model where high performing upperclassmen are trained to be peer advisors to assist lowerclassmen. In our Peer to Peer mentoring model, student mentors undergo extensive formal training facilitated by the project administrators. They are also equipped with tools and strategies to motivate students to work toward achieving long term academic and career success. The mentees are able to receive regular assistance from their mentor about how to plan for academic success. Mentors and mentees meet on a regular basis and must create an academic plan for each semester. Then mentors periodically check in with mentees on academic progress as well as making sure that students are integrating into the CUNY BMI community and plugging into campus resources. (para. 2)

Since 2010, Black and Latino male students who participated in the CUNY Black Male Initiative program have performed better than those who did not participate in the program (CUNY – BMI, 2015). In 2014, grade point averages of Black and Latino males who participated in the CUNY BMI program were 2.32 compared to 2.18 for Black and Latino males who did not participate. Full-time

Black and Latino males in 2014 who participated in BMI averaged earning 9.2

semester credits compared to 8.2 for Black and Latino males who did not participate

in the program. Furthermore, in 2014, Black and Latino males participating in the

BMI program averaged a 65.60% first-year retention rate compared to an average of

58.70% by Black and Latino males who did not participate in the program (CUNY –

BMI, 2015).

Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI)

It is important to describe the history, focus, and programmatic structure of the UMOCI program at Pinewood Community College, a Hispanic Serving Community College (HSCC). PCC received its first funding from the city's budget in the fall 2007 semester and began operating at PCC as the '*Black Male Initiative*'. Initially serving a small cohort of students, the program operated with formal and informal programming: formal programming focused on providing academic support services while the informal focused on student engagement through student activities. Since the inception of the PCC minority male program, operation of the program has been conducted under numerous names, leaderships, and mission statements. Established in 2014, the current operating initiative utilizes a hybrid structure of both formal and informal programming.

UMOCI established the following program mission statement:

> The Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI) was created to provide assistance and strategies to male students attending Pinewood Community College (PCC). UMOCI assists male students to successfully transition and maneuver through the academic process. The program strives to retain male students through graduation with the encouragement to complete terminal degrees. The program helps male students develop personally, professionally, and socially. UMOCI helps male students learn important leadership skills, while planning a direction for their future. The mission encompasses and promotes the 5 W's & 3 C's for each participant.

5W's

- Well Dressed – First impressions are lasting ones – starting with one's attire

- Well Spoken – Leaders have to practice properly communicating with everyone

- Well Read – Male leaders must read to advance in life

- Well Serviced – Male leaders must give back to their community to help it and others grow

- Well Balanced – Male leaders must learn to properly balance all aspects of their lives

3C's

- Choices – Male leaders make good choices

- Change – Male leaders understand that change is consistent to better themselves and society

- Completion – Never give-up and completion is a must

UMOCI provides students opportunities to engage with other peers through social engagement activities (trips, leadership development conferences, on-campus events) and to engage in academic activities (peer-tutoring, service learning, and academic skills-building). From 2014 until 2016, the program director requested contact information for students who qualified to participate in the UMOCI program from the Institutional Effectiveness office and used email and direct mail for sending marketing materials to potential participants. At the beginning of each semester, the program director and staff held program orientations/informational sessions with new

and returning students to further explain services offered through the program. For three consecutive academic years, the college's Student Government Association presidents were active participants of the UMOCI program.

Mentoring Black Males in College

Mentors and mentorship programs are significant in the success of black males in college. Participating in a campus mentorship program can increase academic success, provide a sense of community, and build positive relationships for Black male college students (Gibson, 2014). Black males who participate in mentorship programs "tend to show higher self-esteem, higher levels of academic motivation, and performance" (Gibson, 2014, p. 75). Gibson (2014) asserted that mentorship can take place by means other than face-to-face and that some postsecondary institutions utilize technology as a way to connect Black men with mentors. Some community colleges utilize web-based mentoring as a way to increase the social and technology skills of Black men (Grant & Hinds, 2009; Gibson, 2014). Using web-based mentoring can help Black males further develop communication skills with faculty, staff, peers, and potential employers (Grant & Hinds, 2009; Gibson, 2014). According to Palmer et al. (2014), "While on-campus mentors are salient to the success of Black men, mentors and role models off campus also provide a rich source of support for Black men" (p. 75).

Black Males at Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges

Excelencia in Education, a not-for-profit organization and information source for Latino educational achievement, indicated that the U. S. Department of Education defines Hispanic-serving institutions as "accredited and degree-granting

public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with twenty-five percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment" (Excelencia in Education, 2015, para. 2). HSIs are the fastest-growing higher education institutions in the United States (Béjar, 2008). HSIs operate as both two- and four-year institutions, the most common type being public two-year community colleges (Benitez, 1998). Almost half of all HSIs are community colleges (Excelencia in Education, 2015).

Nguyen et al., (2015) indicated that African Americans/Blacks were 10% of the student population at HSCCs, and the Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2015) indicated that 46% of HSIs' students were males. According to IPEDS (2015), in 2012, 102,285 and, in 2013, 103,010, Black males enrolled in HSCCs. Although Black male enrollment increased in 2012 and 2013, enrollment of Black males declined in 2014 at HSCCs to 99,813. The small decrease in enrollment in HSCCs reflected the nationwide trend of declining enrollment in community colleges (Juszkiewicz, 2015). Juszkiewicz stated that one of the reasons for the decline in community college enrollment was an upturn in the national economy, allowing more people to enter the workforce. Despite the downward enrollment number of Black males in 2014 at HSCCs, IPEDS indicated that during the same period, graduation rates of Black males at HSCCs continued to increase. According to IPEDS, 9,783 out of 102,285 (9.5%) Black males graduated from HSCCs in 2012; 10,401 out of 103,010 (10%) graduated in 2013; and 11,242 out of 99,813 (11%) Black males graduated from an HSCC in 2014.

Researchers have conducted studies of Black males enrolled in community colleges (Wood & Harris III, 2013; Harris III, Wood, & Newman, 2015; Harper & Harris, 2012; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007; Strayhorn, 2010); however, scholars have published only minimally on Black male community college students enrolled specifically at Hispanic serving community colleges.

The education of students at Hispanic-Serving institutions is important, and HSIs must not ignore the educational experiences of students of other races/ethnicities. Santiago and Andrade (2010) stated that

> Serving Latino students does not mean that institutions serve
> Latinos at the expense of other students. A Latino student
> success model is not an either/or proposition. Rather
> institutions that serve their students well can build on what
> works in serving Latino students effectively to better serve other
> students as well. (p. 8)

With the large number of Black males enrolling in community colleges and because HSCCs are the fastest growing segment of higher education in the United States, it is important that researchers more fully understand the academic and personal experiences of these men. Hurtado and Ruiz (2012) believed that "Various organizational theory frameworks and general principles derived from case study research on institutional change can be helpful in determining the ways that HSIs (and individuals within institutions) respond to changes in diverse student enrollments and other aspects of their external environments. Changes in

institutional culture and broad-based institutional change are best derived from such institutional case studies" (p. 32).

Historical Models of Black Male College Drop-Out and Stop-Out

The current literature includes studies that attempt to explain the Black male college drop-out and stop-out phenomena. Gibson (2014) asserted that Black males lose interest in the collegiate experience due to the need to "acculturate to a new, different, and unfamiliar environment" (p. 79). Tinto (1993) researched college student drop-out and stop-out phenomenon and found that college students need to be integrated into college in order to persist to graduation. Tinto (1975, 1993) said that students make decisions to stay or leave college based on the interaction between the student and the institution's academic and social systems. Anderson (1995) indicated that students entering college may lose contact with positive influences including parents, peers, teachers, and counselors. Anderson further stated positive influences may have included parents who presented value of a college education and its importance, peers from similar socioeconomic groups who value a college education and have aspirations to complete a college degree, and teachers and counselors who expressed confidence in the student's potential for success in college.

Barriers Faced by Black Male College Students

Padilla's et al.(1997) local model of successful minority students identified barriers faced by minority students who earned a degree at a large research university in the Southwest. Barriers identified in LMSMS included discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resources (Padilla et al.). Discontinuity

barriers include obstacles that hinder "a student's smooth and continuous transition from high school to college" (Padilla et al., p. 129). Lack of nurturing barriers "dealt with the absence of supportive resources on the campus needed to facilitate the adjustment and development of minority students" (Padilla et al., p. 131). According to Padilla et al. (1997), "Lack-of-presence barriers [are] associated with the absence of minorities in the curriculum, in the university's programs, and in the general university population of students, staff, and faculty" (p. 131). Resource barriers include lack of money and difficulty associated with the financial aid system in general (Padilla et al., 1997).

Edwards (2007) researched barriers to graduation of African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Davila (2011) duplicated Edwards' study examining Hispanic-serving community college students' perceptions of barriers to their graduating. Edwards identified four areas that contributed to Black male HBCU students' departure from or persistence to on-time graduation: academic, financial, family/relationship, and social integration/participation.

Some Black men encounter academic barriers prior to and upon entering college. The barriers can decrease their abilities to persist to graduation from post-secondary institutions. According to Edwards, African Americans' college admissions rates, grade-point averages, and graduation rates are lower than the rates of their White and Asian counterparts. Furthermore, Edwards held that African Americans have an inability to afford college, are over-represented in special education programs, and attain low scores on standardized tests. Anderson (1995)

indicated that students entering college face barriers relating to lack of academic assessments and information about academic support services offered at the institution.

African Americans, and specifically African American men, can face numerous financial barriers while enrolled in college (Edwards, 2007; Palmer et al., 2014). The financial barriers include money for food, housing, transportation, books, supplies, and personal expenses (Anderson, 1995; Edwards, 2007; Smith, 2015). Anderson (1995) asserted that "Sufficient financial support is important: when it is not available[;]students must expend time and energy, which are not available for academic demands, to earn money" (p. 56).

Lacking family and relationship support has been identified as a barrier faced by Black male college students (Palmer et al., 2014). According to Palmer, "While research has shown a relationship between family support and academic success for Black males, some research has suggested that if Black males enrolled in community colleges are overwhelmed with family responsibilities (Strayhorn, 2011), this could impede their success" (p. 80). Furthermore, Wood (2011) observed that family responsibilities were likely to hinder the success of Black men entering community colleges compared to those who were already enrolled and had made progress towards their degrees.

Black men entering college face barriers related to social integration into the college. Tinto (1993) noted that the integration of students into college involves interactions with fellow students and faculty. Few entering Black male college

students establish relationships with faculty and staff (Garenhire-Crooks et al., 2010).

Tinto (1993) indicated that students entering college go through steps similar to a rite of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation occurs when the student is in the process of disassociating from relationships, norms, and previous memberships. Transition involves students who are "in-between," leaving high school and acquiring the norms of college. Incorporation is the student's becoming integrated into the norms of the college. If interactions experienced by Black males integrating into college are negative, it is likely they will leave. In contrast, if the overall interaction is positive and the student successfully integrates into college both socially and academically, it is likely the student will persist.

Successful Black Males in Community Colleges

Scholars have conducted research in an attempt to understand Black and other under-represented males who are successful in postsecondary education (Strayhorn, 2010; Palmer et al., 2014; Wood, Harris, and Xiong, 2014, Harper, 2006). Recent studies exploring experiences of successful Black males in college have utilized J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III's (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes model (SEO) (Moore, 2015; Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015). The model was developed as a tool to capture data and explain factors that aid academic success, persistence, and graduation rates among men of color, specifically within community colleges.

Wood et al. (2014), provided the following description of the SEO model:

The SEO model is comprised of seven key constructs including

input factors, socio-ecological domains, and student success

out-comes. Input factors include background/defining variables

(e.g., age, time status, veteran status, primary language) and

societal factors (e.g., stereotypes, prejudice, economic

conditions). These input factors provide a framework by which

to understand the differential realities of men of color during

college. The core of the SEO model is focused on the influence

of four socioecological domains (e.g., non-cognitive, academic,

environmental, campus ethos) on student success. (p. 130)

According to Moore (2015), " . . . the SEO model takes into account research

related to the impact of institutional, internal, and external factors for men of color in

community colleges" (p. 2). Dating back to research conducted by Mason (1998) on

the persistence and success of Black male community college students, defining

and measuring student success has been extremely difficult. However, scholars

such as J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III have been able to utilize various findings

of earlier scholars' research to provide direction and plausible explanations for

successful minority male community college students.

Assumptions

After completing the literature review as well as having personal knowledge

about the UMOCI program, participants, Pinewood Community College, and being a

self-identified Black male community college graduate, the researcher had general

assumptions that were explored in this study. A general assumption pertaining to

this study held by the researcher was that the UMOCI program was instrumental to

participants who participated in the program and graduated from Pinewood

Community College. Furthermore, the researcher assumed that most of the

participants faced at least one barrier found in scholarly research about Black male

community college students; however, engagement with both peers and staff

members within the program assisted participants to overcome the barrier(s) and

successfully graduate from PCC. Another general assumption that the researcher

had entering this study was that the participants in this study who did not participate

in UMOCI discovered another support program, staff/faculty member, and/or peers

that assisted them to overcome faced barriers to successfully graduate. Realizing

that the researcher was entering this study with assumptions and potential biases,

the researcher approached the research inductively in an attempt to not impose

personal views and conceptualizations.

Summary

The literature review established that Black men who enroll in postsecondary

education are likely to start-out at a community college. Furthermore, the literature

revealed that enrollment of Black males at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

surpassed enrollments at both Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs) and

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Scholars have studied

experiences of Black males at PBIs, HBCUs, and Predominately White Institutions;

however, there is a paucity of information related to their experiences at HSIs.

Findings from scholarly research indicates that most Black men who enter

college do not persist and do not graduate. Additionally, research findings have also

indicated that even if a Black male persists to earning a certificate or college degree, he faces many barriers. Due to the fact that there is a gap in the literature about experiences of Black men who successfully persist in and graduate from a HSI, this study has the potential to become an important source of important academic and social data for current and future leaders at HSIs and HSCCs.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This Chapter presents the research methodology that captured the

experiences of Black men who participated in UMOCI, a minority male initiative

(MMI) program at a Hispanic-serving community college (HSCC) and Black men

who did not participate in the UMOCI program but successfully graduated. The case

study method guided this study. Chapter III concentrates on the design of the study,

the setting, ethical considerations, participant selection, data collection methods,

data analysis, validity and reliability, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Design of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to examine the

experiences of Black male graduates of Pinewood Community College, a Hispanic-

serving community college, who may or may not have participated in Urban Men of

Color Initiative (UMOCI), a minority male initiative program. Therefore, the collective

case study method best directed and fit this research design. The overarching

research question for this study was *How do the experiences of Black male students*

who participated in a male initiative program at Pinewood Community College differ

from those of Black males who did not?

According to Padilla (1997):

> The unfolding matrix (Padilla, 1994) is so named because it starts
>
> out as a single leading construct derived from a given
>
> understanding of the local situation. In the situation involving
>
> successful college students, the leading construct is barriers to
>
> successful attainment of a college degree for a given campus and

group of students. From this leading construct, the matrix unfolds . .

. for the local situation based on the emic perspectives of

participants in the situation. In the case of successful students, the

matrix unfolds vertically to include exhaustively the examples of

barriers to degree attainment for the target campus and students.

(p. 138)

A collective case study, also known as a multiple case study, best fit the need

of this research because it allowed the researcher to conduct an "in-depth

investigation of an individual, group, event or system, within its real-life context"

while allowing the researcher to "understand situations more clearly and deeply than

before, from varied perspectives" (Lambert, 2013, p. 15). In this study, the

researcher was able to collect data during semi-structured interviews with Black

males, who were individual cases and successfully graduated from a HSCC. In an

attempt to understand the relevance of the UMOCI to Black males' graduation from

Pinewood Community College, five research participants who participated in the

UMOCI program and graduated were selected and five participants were also

selected who did not participate in the program and graduated from the same

institution.

The UMOCI program serves primarily African American males, a distinct

population at Pinewood Community College, and has the specific purpose of

increasing their persistence and graduation rates. In this study, the UMOCI program

adds value to understanding successful Black males' experiences by understanding

the role, if any, the program played in Black males' graduation from Pinewood

Community College. The UMOCI program at PCC had a multitude of components that were explored to understand the impact on participants' graduation including: mentorship, transfer advisement, academic progress review, and intrusive advising. These components of the program were designed to assist Black males to successfully graduate from the institution; however, hearing the *experiences* of Black males who participated in the program provided an in-depth understanding of the role, if any, the program played in their graduation from Pinewood Community College. As previously mentioned, the researcher was the former Director of the UMOCI program at PCC and had personal views of aspects of the program that caused Black males to successfully graduate. However, conducting this study utilizing a case study design allowed Black males who were participants of UMOCI and successfully graduated from PCC as well as Black make who did not participate in UMOCI and successfully graduated from PCC to provide information surrounding the role, if any, the program had on their success.

According to Merriam (2002), a useful aspect of qualitative research is that "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" (p. 5). In contrast, she stated " . . . the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' [According to Merriam] it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data" (p. 5). Furthermore, Ravitch and Carl (2016) argued that bias exists in all research and an examination of biases becomes an ethical responsibility of the researcher(s).

According to Ravitch and Carl, " . . . researcher reflexivity is the systematic assessment of [the researcher's] identity, positionality, and subjectivities" (p. 15). It is thus important that the primary researcher collecting and analyzing data in this study review potential biases. An epoche allows the researcher to explore self-experiences to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions (Merriam, 2002). Furthermore, Merriam (2009) asserted "These prejudices and assumptions are then *bracketed* or temporarily set aside so that we [researchers] can examine consciousness itself" (p. 26). As part of the epoche process, the researcher explored self-biases based on personal experiences and understandings of the study's subject matter, program, and participants. Furthermore, the epoche review process included the researcher's reviewing his role as the previous director of UMOCI and his personal relationships with some of the participants.

An approach was conducted to ensure the researcher did not impose his own biases, concepts, and terms into the study. The researcher clearly recognized biases as the data collector and interpreter. His potential biases included being the former director of UMOCI, his close relationships with many of the study participants, being a Black male community college graduate, and having a direct relationship with the site in this study. Recognizing these potential biases, the researcher established procedures and provisions that helped to eliminate the biases during both the collection process and the data interpretation phase of this study. The procedures and provisions to help reduce biases during the data collection process included conducting interviews via Skype or other recordable programs so that verbatim responses could be collected, transcribed/summarized, and analyzed by

the researcher. Furthermore, procedures and provisions to reduce data interpretation biases included participant validation in which participants had the ability to review interview transcripts and provide feedback prior to data analysis conducted by the researcher.

Setting of the Study

Pinewood Community College (PCC) was selected as the study site because of its location in a large northeast city, its dedication to assisting Black males to persist to graduation, and because of its minority male initiative program essential to this study. According to The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (n.d.), the leading framework for recognizing and describing diversity in U. S. higher education, PCC is a large two-year public institution. PCC is a single site Hispanic-serving community college, part of the Todays University System (TUS), and enrolled 11,506 students in fall 2014 (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), PCC's student body in fall 2014 consisted of 59% full-time and 41% part-time enrollments, 56% women and 44% men. Additionally, 64% of the student body was Hispanic, 28% Black, 3% Asian, 2% White, 2% non-resident aliens, and 1% two-or- more races. PCC participates in the United States Department of Education Title V grant designed to "assist with strengthening institutional programs, facilities, and services to expand the educational opportunities for Hispanic Americans and other underrepresented populations" (U. S Department of Education, n. d., para. 1).

Today University System has established on each campus a minority male initiative program to assist minority men to be successful in obtaining higher education in the large Northeast city. The system's minority male initiative mission includes language of having goals to increase, encourage, and support the inclusion and educational success of students from groups that are severely under-represented in higher education particularly with minority males. PCC received funding from TUS to administer the UMOCI program.

Pinewood Community College was selected as the site for this study because most studies about Hispanic-serving institutions have narrowly focused on institutions in the Southwest and on Mexican students (Davila, 2011; Mercado, 2012; Meling, 2012). Furthermore, PCC was selected because it educates more than 4,000 self-identified Black men. Although PCC is the site for this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted via skype as the participants no longer attended the institution. The findings from this study at a single site can produce new literature about the experiences of northeast Black men who graduated from a Hispanic-serving institution, an under-studied population in a type of institution and geographic region of the United States.

Ethical Considerations

After identifying the site in this study, this researcher examined ethical considerations related to the study's site, program, and participants. Researchers should review and anticipate ethical issues that may arise during their study (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) stated that "researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research;

guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems" (p. 92). As part of an ethical review, researchers should have their research proposal reviewed by the institutional review board (IBR) on their college's campus (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell, "IRB committees exist on campuses because of federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violations" (p. 95).

As required by both Morgan State University's and TUS's rules and guidelines set for conducting research, all IRB guidelines were followed. As part of the IRB application submission, study information, sample participant consent forms, a list of proposed/sample questions and procedures, and sample marketing fliers/participant request letters/emails were submitted. The researcher followed several protocols in this study. First, the researcher completed IRB requirements established by Morgan State University. Next, the researcher obtained IRB approvals from Morgan State University and Today University System's (TUS) institutional research departments to perform the study. The researcher followed this step by requesting contact information for potential student participants after receipt of IRB approval from PCC/TUS. Next, potential student participants were contacted by phone and/or email to explain and describe the study. Participants were then asked if they were interested in participating in the study. Once a group of students was identified and the students agreed to participate in the study, consent forms were sent to each of the participants to sign and returned to the research investigator. Next, semi-structured interviews were conducted via Skype at times that were convenient for each participant. The researcher recorded the sessions so that they could be reviewed by the researcher at a later date. In addition to recording the sessions, the researcher took notes during the interviews. Finally, after conducting the semi-structured interviews, the researcher transcribed and coded participants' responses. The recorded interviews and

transcriptions were stored separately. All collected information were housed at the researcher's home during the study. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher will destroy the collected data/information. In addition to adhering to IRB requirements established by both institutions, the researcher remained conscious of and reviewed established research protocols for potential biases and assumptions. Appendix (1) is the IRB approval received from Pinewood Community College, the study site, and appendix (2) is the approval received from Morgan State University.

The Collective Case Study

This study was a collective case study because each participant represented a unique case. Johnson and Christensen (2014) stated "In the collective case study, the researcher believes that he or she can gain greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases in one overall research study" (p. 436). Furthermore, Johnson and Christensen indicated that "the cases in the collective case study are usually studied instrumentally rather than intrinsically" [and] "several cases are usually studied" (p.436). There are advantages of studying more than one case include: providing the ability to compare several cases for similarities and differences, effectively test a theory by observing the results of multiple cases, and the ability to generalize the results from multiple cases than from a single case (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

In this collective case study, the *case* is the bounded system. The focus of the *case* in this study was Black males who graduated from a single Hispanic Serving Institution. The study further compared and explored experiences of Black males who participated in a UMOCI to Black males who did not in search of commonalities and differences between the two groups of graduates.

Sample Selection

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), researchers must decide prior to determining data collection methods who the study participants will be. These two researchers observed that

> Purposeful sampling provides context-rich and detailed
> accounts of specific populations and locations. Purposeful
> sampling means that individuals are purposefully chosen to
> participate in the research for specific reasons, including that
> they have a certain experience, have knowledge of a specific
> phenomenon, reside in a specific location, or some other
> reason. Purposeful sampling allows [the researcher] to
> deliberately select individuals and/or research settings that will
> help [the researcher] to get the information needed to answer
> [the] research questions. (p. 128)

This study used a purposeful sampling approach to identify participants who were Black male graduates of Pinewood Community College, a HSCC, who could provide valuable and significant answers to the overarching research question: *How do the experiences of Black male students who participated in a male initiative program at Pinewood Community College differ from those of Black males who did not?*

Participants

After identifying Pinewood Community College as this study's site and receiving IRB approvals, this researcher invited ten Black men to participate in the

study. The researcher reviewed literature on collective case studies and the total number of participants in similar collective case studies and determined that ten participants are typical in this type of study.

Based on the focus of this study, participants self-identified as Black, male, and a Pinewood Community College graduate. Upon identifying participants who met those general participation requirements, two separate participant groups were formed. One group consisted of five Black men who met general participant requirements, those who participated in the UMOCI program at PCC. The second group consisted of five Black men who met general participant requirements but who did not participate in the UMOCI program at PCC. The two groups were established to compare experiences of Black men who participated in the UMOCI program to those who did not and successfully graduate from the institution.

Group 1 – UMOCI Participants

   The first group of participants was comprised of five male graduates who

were student members of the UMOCI program at Pinewood Community College

(Table 1). Pseudonyms were given to each participant to assure confidentiality. The

following is a brief background on each participant to give the reader more insight

into the unique aspects of the participants.

Table 1

Geographical Overview of UMOCI Participants

Pseudonym	#1 - Anthony	#2 - Richie	#3 - Andre	#4 - Don	#5 - Thomas
Age	26	26	30	35	26
Enrollment Status	Full-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time
Employment Status	Full-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Unemployed/ Part-Time
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Goal Entering College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Over 3.0	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0
Year of Enrollment	2013	2013	2008	2003 Re-enrolled in 2014	2014
Year of Completion	2014 Reverse Transferred credits	2014	2016	2016	2016
Remedial Courses	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Funding Source	FA & Loans	FA	FA & Loans	FA	FA & Self-Pay

UMOCI Participant 1 – "Anthony"

Anthony is a non-traditional student who transferred to Pinewood Community College from a small local suburban private college. Due to financial constraints, he was required to return home and continue his education at PCC, his local community college. As a result of a death in his immediate family, Anthony had to work full time to take care of personal obligations including independent housing. Anthony, an education major, works with children at a non-profit organization. He was President of the *Future Teachers Club* and the mascot at PCC. Anthony was an active member of an intercollegiate Greek- fraternity established for African American men. After graduating from PCC, Anthony enrolled in a local public four-year university in pursuit of his bachelor's degree in elementary education.

UMOCI Participant 2 – "Richie"

Richie is a non-traditional student who did not immediately enroll in Pinewood Community College after graduating from high school. Richie lives within two miles of the college and knew of the college from living in the area. Richie is a single father who shares custody of a son age 6. Richie spends a great deal of time with his son and often took his son to PCC with him. Richie was an executive member of the Student Government Association. He also held several part-time jobs while enrolled at PCC. After graduating from PCC, he enrolled in a local public four-year university and is now pursuing his bachelor's degree. He is majoring in political science and minoring in business administration.

UMOCI Participant 3 – "Andre"

Andre is a non-traditional student who entered Pinewood Community College as a part-time student in 2008. Andre worked part-time and attended PCC part-time. While enrolled at PCC, Andre had unstable housing and resided both at home and independently. Andre was an education major and now works both as a blue collar worker and as a mentor for urban, at-risk kids. Although Andre has aspirations of attaining a four-year degree, he did not immediately enroll at a four-year college after graduating from PCC.

UMOCI Participant 4 – "Don"

Don is a non-traditional student who originally entered Pinewood Community College in 2003. He transferred to a local four-year university without earning an Associate's degree from Pinewood Community College. Don stopped attending the four-year university after one year, and over the course of the next five year became a single father of three sons, including a son with special needs. Don returned to Pinewood Community College in 2014, majored in political science and participated in the political sciences club as well as the UMOCI program at PCC. Although Don was not a member of PCC's student government association (SGA), he participated in numerous SGA events including a student protest against tuition increases. Don graduated from PCC in 2015 and enrolled in a local public four-year university where he is pursuing a bachelor's degree in political science.

Participant 5 – "Thomas"

Thomas is a non-traditional student who entered Pinewood Community College as a full-time student. Thomas entered PCC as a transfer student who had

previously attended a large northeast HBCU. Although Thomas performed well academically at the HBCU, he struggled financially and was forced to return home to further his post-secondary education locally. Thomas has close ties to his family. At the conclusion of his matriculation at Pinewood Community College, Thomas was offered a scholarship to attend another four-year university out of state. Although Thomas wanted to attend the university, he decided to stay home after discussing the matter with his family. Thomas currently attends a local, private, highly selective, four-year university in pursuit of a bachelor's degree.

Group 2 – Non-UMOCI Participant Responses

The second group of participants was comprised of five Black male graduates who were not student members of the UMOCI program at Pinewood Community College (Table 2). Pseudonyms have been given to each participant to assure confidentiality.

The following is a brief background on each participant to give the reader more insight into the unique aspects of the participants.

Table 2

Geographical Overview of Non-UMOCI Participants

Pseudonym	#6 - KJ	#7 - DayShawn	#8 – Roy	#9 - Michael	#10 - Jimmy
Age	25	21	27	33	30
Enrollment Status	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time
Employment Status	Full-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Part-Time
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	No	No	No	No
Goal Entering College	Transfer to 4-year College	Earning 60 Credits/Not Transferring	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-Year College	Transfer to 4-Year College
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0
Year of Enrollment	2014	2013	2013	2006/2012	2013
Year of Completion	2016	2016	2015	2016	2014
Remedial Courses	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Funding Source	FA	SP	Loans	FA	FA/SP

Non- UMOCI Participant 6 – "KJ"

KJ is a non-traditional student who entered Pinewood Community College in 2014 as a transfer student. He is originally from the southern region of the United States and has no family locally. KJ is openly gay and is heavily involved in the arts. He relocated from a southern state to the northeast region of the United States to pursue a degree and career in the arts. Pinewood Community College was KJ's last choice of colleges to attend due to its lack of programs in the arts; however, PCC was more convenient than the Mid-city college (pseudonym) that specialized in the arts. Before relocating to the northeast, KJ attended a community college in the south. KJ participated in a Community Based Organization (CBO) that assisted low-income students enroll local post-secondary institutions. After graduating from Pinewood Community College KJ was accepted and enrolled in a local private college for the arts.

Non-UMOCI Participant 7 – "DayShawnNon- UMOCI Participant 7 – "DayShawn"

DayShawn is a traditional l student who entered Pinewood Community College in 2013. He entered PCC solely to earn sixty credit hours, the minimum that is required to enter his desired workforce career, law enforcement. DayShawn has a career goal of becoming a police officer in a northeast city. While enrolled at PCC, DayShawn worked 30 hours a week. Although DayShawn wanted to participate in student activities on campus, he was unable to because of his work schedule. After completing his Associate's degree at Pinewood Community College, DayShawn enrolled in a local four-year university. The northeast police force that DayShawn

desires to work for has a long list of eligible new recruits and an application screening process that can take a year or more after completing the minimum college requirements. After being informed that it could take a year or more before he might be able to work in law enforcement, he decided that he would pursue his bachelor's degree.

Non-UMOCI Participant 8 – "Roy"

Roy is a non-traditional student who entered Pinewood Community College in 2013. He enrolled in the college as a transfer student from a large 4-year research university known for its sports and academics. After experiencing academic challenges at the 4-year university, Roy returned home and continued his post-secondary education at PCC. While enrolled at PCC, Roy was an active member of the college's student government association (SGA). Roy joined the SGA after being encouraged by a friend to run for office. Roy also worked as a peer math tutor while attending PCC. Roy currently remains as a math tutor at PCC. After completing his degree at Pinewood Community College, Roy enrolled in a local public four-year university and is pursuing his bachelor's degree.

Non-UMOCI Participant 9 – "Michael"

Michael is a non-traditional student who originally entered Pinewood Community College in 2006 after completing his General Education Degree (GED). In 2007, Michael left PCC and joined the army. Upon being honorably discharged, Michael returned home and decided to use his Veteran benefits to enroll in college. He continues to struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and is currently unemployed. While attending Pinewood College, Michael was a member

of the Veteran Affairs student club. After completing his Associate's degree at Pinewood Community College, Michael enrolled in a local public four-year university and is pursuing his bachelor's degree in business administration with a focus on marketing.

Non-UMOCI Participant 10 – "Jimmy"

Jimmy is a non-traditional student who entered Pinewood Community College as a "reverse" transfer student. Jimmy had attended another local, large urban four-year university and was academically dismissed. While attending PCC, Jimmy worked part-time and commuted on public transportation to school. Jimmy majored in political science and worked as a peer tutor. He graduated from PCC and immediately entered a four-year university. Jimmy graduated from the four-year university within one year and immediately enrolled in a Master's program in which he is scheduled to graduate in the Spring 2017. Jimmy currently teaches a political science course at PCC.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

In the organization phase of this study, access to potential participants was convenient because they were all students who were enrolled at PCC. During the data collection phase of this study, some participants lived locally and others attended four-year universities outside of the northeast city. As a result of these changes, the researcher decided that the best data collection method for this study was to employ Skype as the primary vehicle for semi-structured interviews. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face for convenience of the participants.

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), "Semi-structured interviews are the most common in qualitative research . . . " (p. 153). Furthermore, the authors state:

> In semi-structured interviews, the researcher uses the interview
> instrument to organize and guide the interview but can also use
> the specific, tailored follow-up questions within and across
> interviews. In this approach the interview instrument includes
> the specific questions to be asked of all respondents, but the
> order of questions and the wording of specific questions and
> sub-questions follow a unique and customized conversational
> path with each participant. Probing and follow-up questions
> may be suggested on the interview instrument, and they are
> used as needed in the interview. (p. 154)

Due to its convenience for participants, semi-structured and follow up questions, when necessary, were asked during Skype interviews. During the recorded Skype interviews, the researcher asked participants questions related to their experiences as Black men attending Pinewood Community College.

Each of the questions followed the conceptual framework posited by Padilla (1997) focusing on discontinuity (high school to college experiences), lack of nurturing (elective family groups), lack of presence (skill building), and lack of resources (institutional support).

Utilizing Skype provided the opportunity to review the recorded sessions and to transcribe them enabling the researcher to better reflect on participants'

responses. Because the researcher identified biases based on positionality and relationships with participants, verbatim responses helped to reduce potential issues.

The transcribed interviews were emailed to the participants who were encouraged to review them for accuracy as member checks. Participants were allotted up to one week to review and respond concerning inconsistencies or further explanations.

Data Analysis

Case study analysis consists of multiple steps including: bringing together information about the case (i.e. interview logs or transcripts, fields notes, reports, records), organizing the material collected, analyzing the data, and compiling a final write up or case report (Merriam, 2009). A cross-case analysis, search for similarities and differences across multiple cases (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), was performed in this study. Merriam stated, "The level of analysis [in a cross-case analysis] can result in a unified description across cases; it can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases" (p. 204).

Once the semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed, coding was performed to organize and analyze the data. Theme development consists of noting reoccurring words and phrases in the data (Myers, 2012). According to Creswell (1998), "In the open coding phase, the researcher examines the text (e.g., transcripts, field notes, documents) for salient categories of information supported by

the text" (p. 150). According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), "During analysis and writing, the researcher will always examine and report on the case because the case is always the primary unit of analysis in case study research" (p. 437) and that "other units of analysis that are embedded in the case might also be examined." The analysis included reviewing transcripts several times in search of common phrases, nuances, and subthemes. While reviewing notes and summaries electronically, the researcher used a word processing program to highlight common words and themes.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a term Creswell (2014) uses to address validity in a qualitative research study. He provides eight validity strategies that a researcher can use to ensure trustworthiness of a qualitative study: triangulation, member checking, use of rich and thick descriptions to convey findings, clarification of researcher's biases, presentation of negative or discrepant information, spending prolonged time in the field, using peer debriefing, and using an external auditor to review the entire project (Creswell, 2014).

For example, one consideration related to trustworthiness was related to researcher bias and the clarification of such as this researcher's years of first-hand experiences working directly with minority male initiative programs. Creswell (2014) believed that prolonged time in the field allows the researcher to develop "an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and can convey detail[s] about the site and the people that lends credibility to the narrative account. The more experience that a researcher has with participants in their settings, the more

accurate or valid will be the findings" (p. 202). Other strategies Creswell discusses included triangulation (checking other data sources provided by Pinewood College), member checking (allowing participants to examine their transcripts), thick descriptions (invoking prompts for participants' clarifications), and peer debriefing (checking with college personnel and university professors). Each of these protocols was followed.

Summary

This study sought to understand the experiences of Black males who successfully persisted to graduation at Pinewood Community College, a Hispanic-Serving community college. Specifically, the study sought to understand whether participating in the Urban Men of Color Initiative program played a role in some participants' graduation from the college. The researcher provided information that supported the reasons and importance of conducting this study as a collective case study. Additionally, the design and setting of the study, ethical considerations, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, validity and reliability, and the limitations of this study were provided and explained.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore and attempt to understand experiences of Black males who successfully graduated from a northeast Hispanic serving community college. The major focus and general question of this study was: How does the local model of successful students, based on Padilla's models (1991, 1994, 1997), reflect differences in the experiences of successful Black male community college students (at Pinewood College) who attended a male initiative program and those successful Black male community college students (at Pinewood College) who did not?

This study focused on Today University System (TUS) and the *Urban Men of Color Initiative* (UMOCI), a minority male initiative program established at Pinewood Community College (PCC), a northeast Hispanic serving community college. TUS is a large northeast higher education system that includes: pre-college programs, community colleges, four-year colleges, a graduate center, and professional schools. Pseudonyms are utilized for the college, university system, and minority male initiative program in an attempt to assure anonymity.

Pinewood Community College established the Urban Men of Color Initiative program in an effort to increase minority male persistence and graduation rates. The UMOCI program is one of thirty TUS's system-wide initiatives with the same focus and mission. UMOCI offers both formal and informal programming: formal programming focuses on providing academic support services while the informal programming focuses on student engagement through student activities.

Researcher and Study

To answer the overarching question, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with Black males who graduated and earned an Associate's degree from Pinewood Community College—one group was involved in UMOCI and one group was not. Eight Interviews were conducted via Skype while two others were conducted in person. Each interview was transcribed and then sent to each participant via email. Participants were given one week to modify any responses given during the interview. None of the interviewees requested modifications. At the conclusion of the allotted one week, the researcher reviewed transcripts and notes, and conducted open coding in search of similarities and differences among the responses. During the analysis phase of this study, the researcher discovered that responses from participants had reached a point of saturation and found it unnecessary to conduct additional semi-structured interviews.

The researcher clearly recognized his potential biases as the former director of Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI), the minority male initiative program in this study, as well as his close relationships with many of the study's participants. The researcher made every effort to curtail his biases in order to allow the voices of the participants to be clearly represented.

Study Participants

Table 1 and Table 2 in Chapter IV provides a brief background of each participant. All of the participants in this research study were Black males, over the age of 18, who earned an Associate degree from Pinewood Community College between 2014 and 2016.

Table 1

Geographical Overview of UMOCI Participants

Pseudonym	#1 - Anthony	#2 - Richie	#3 - Andre	#4 - Don	#5 - Thomas
Age	26	26	30	35	26
Enrollment Status	Full-Time	Full-Time	Part-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time
Employment Status	Full-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Unemployed/ Part-Time
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Goal Entering College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-year College
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Over 3.0	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0
Year of Enrollment	2013	2013	2008	2003 Re-enrolled in 2014	2014
Year of Completion	2014 Reverse Transferred credits	2014	2016	2016	2016
Remedial Courses	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Funding Source	FA & Loans	FA	FA & Loans	FA	FA & Self-Pay

Table 2

Geographical Overview of Non-UMOCI Participants

Pseudonym	#6 - KJ	#7 - DayShawn	#8 – Roy	#9 - Michael	#10 - Jimmy
Age	25	21	27	33	30
Enrollment Status	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time
Employment Status	Full-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Part-Time
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	No	No	No	No
Goal Entering College	Transfer to 4-year College	Earning 60 Credits/Not Transferring	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-Year College	Transfer to 4-Year College
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0
Year of Enrollment	2014	2013	2013	2006/2012	2013
Year of Completion	2016	2016	2015	2016	2014
Remedial Courses	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Funding Source	FA	SP	Loans	FA	FA/SP

In addition to meeting the established criteria for the study, participants also had one or more of the following characteristics: single fathers, reared by grandparents, openly gay, reared in single and/or two parent households, and first generation college students. Nine of the ten participants attended PCC full time and one participant attended the institution part-time. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 35. Two of the participants who participated in UMOCI were single fathers. Half of the participants had to complete remedial courses before graduating from PCC. Four of the participants had cumulative GPAs over 3.0 and six participants had cumulative GPAs less than 3.0.

Analysis of Interview Questions

General question: How does the local model of successful students, based on

Padilla's model (1991, 1994, 1997), reflect differences in the experiences of

successful Black male community college students (at Pinewood College) who

attended a male initiative program and those successful Black male community

college students (at Pinewood College) who did not?

Group 1 – UMOCI Participants' Responses

The first group of participants was comprised of five male graduates who

were student members of the UMOCI program at Pinewood Community College

(Table 1). Pseudonyms have been given to each participant to assure

confidentiality. The researcher provides a brief background on each participant to

give the reader more insight on participants individually.

Interview Question 1: What would you consider to be positive and negative

aspects (*discontinuity*) of being a student at Pinewood Community College?

Black male participants in both groups spoke favorably about their

experiences as students at Pinewood Community College. The participants

expressed self-pride about completing their Associate's degree and about becoming

alumni of PCC. In general, participants concurred that they had "good" experiences

as students at PCC. One participant said what others also explained: "I felt as

though I received a quality education: PCC offers a quality education to students

who want it."

Participants spoke about their personal development and academic

achievement attained at Pinewood Community College. One response related to

reported grades. Participants in the study who had GPAs over a 3.0 discussed academics as being '*easy'* at the institution while participants who earned less than a 3.0 did not agree. Rather, others discussed skills they learned at the institution that benefitted them after leaving the institution. Two skills that participants commonly mentioned were *time management* and *prioritizing/balancing* personal and school responsibilities.

In summary, the positive responses received from Black male UMOCI at Pinewood Community College included: *engagement with faculty, engagement with peers, participating in particular programs, program administrators and staff, student life activities, and diversity of the student population*. The responses received from Black male UMOCI participants regarding negative aspects of being a student at Pinewood Community College included: *disorganization of the college and specific departments, lack of student life activities, and lack of Black faculty.* Each of these responses are elaborated upon below.

UMOCI Positive comments

Faculty--All UMOCI participants spoke favorably about the interactions and engagement they had with faculty members at Pinewood Community College. Participants indicated that the faculty *cared* about their success, academically and personally. Richie and Anthony, participants who transferred to the same four-year university after graduating from Pinewood Community College, attested to the fact that they liked the personal attention they received at PCC. Furthermore, they expressed that they had not received the same personalized attention at the four-year institution where they were currently enrolled. During the interview, Richie

stated "I was in shock seeing so many students in one class. One of the classes I took last semester was in a lecture hall with more than 100 students. I was not use to not having a one-on-one relationship with my teacher." Thomas revealed that he was able to build "close relationships" with most of the faculty members because they showed an interest in his academic success. Furthermore, Thomas stated:

> Once my teachers found out I had a high GPA and that I performed well in their classes, they would tell me about opportunities and programs that I should consider participating in. I was able to engage in conversations with them about my desire to transfer to out-of-state colleges. My teachers shared their personal experiences attending colleges away from home and encouraged me to apply to schools both locally and out of the area.

Four of the five participants spoke positively about having a Black faculty member as a teacher. Participants expressed that Black faculty members had higher expectations than non-Black faculty; however, most of them thought that Black faculty helped them to be more successful in the future. Ritchie stated "I had a Black teacher that pushed me harder than my white teachers. At the time, I thought it was a bad thing; however, today I appreciate the work ethic he helped me to develop." The participants also concurred that they liked having Black faculty members because it provided them with a sense of *similarity* and someone *they could relate to.*

Although Pinewood Community College's student population is more than 95% minority, the percentage of minority faculty is 57.5% (TUS, 2016). Furthermore, the total percentage of African American/Black students who attend Pinewood Community College is 28% and the percentage of the African American/Black faculty at Pinewood Community College is 29%. Padilla's (1997) *lack of presence* barrier is "associated with the presence of minorities in the curriculum, in the universities' programs, and in the general population of students, staff, and faculty." Thomas indicated that he did not have a Black faculty member during his matriculation at Pinewood Community College. Although he did not have a Black faculty member at the college, he explained "I wish that I could have had a Black faculty member at PCC. I had Black faculty members at my old college and I found them to be more willing to teach and have conversations about issues that affect Blacks."

Engagement with Staff--When speaking about specific aspects of the UMOCI program, participants pointed out that the director and the staff taught students to take personal responsibility for their academic advancement. Participants concurred that the director "believed in them" and "encouraged them" to actively participate in activities at PCC. Don revealed that the director "stayed on top of my GPA and grades." According to Andre, the director "showed me where resources were on campus and followed up with me and other students." Anthony suggested that the director and staff were "mentors" and "they helped me to develop my leadership skills." Richie stated "the administrators of the program showed that they cared." Richie expanded on that thought by saying "the director helped me

develop professional, academic and social skills needed to excel at Pinewood

Community College and at my current 4-year institution." Thomas indicated that the

director "set up a safe place for minority males to meet and interact with one another

when they had free time."

Engagement with Peers--All of the UMOCI participants reported they had an

enriching experience interacting and engaging with their peers both academically

and socially. Participants described their interactions with UMOCI peers as being

part of a "*community* and *family*." Participants felt their peers were people who

challenged and encouraged them to be successful. Participants specifically

mentioned that *peer engagement* in the UMOCI program enhanced their learning

experience and outcomes. Specifically, UMOCI participants explicitly spoke

positively about interacting with other program peers who *understood* and had *things*

in common with them. Don, who is a political science major, stated "some of my

peers in the UMOCI program were also my classmates and members of the political

science club. We were able to have conversations and sometimes debates in the

UMOCI office on political issues that affect Black males and other minorities."

Participating in Particular Programs--All of the UMOCI participants

reported a positive experience being a member of that program. Thomas offered the

following about the program: "UMOCI instills and demands overall excellence from

its participants and must be doing something right because the last three student

government presidents were participants in the program."

Although Thomas, Anthony, and Richie were active members of UMOCI, they

also spoke about other programs at Pinewood Community College that benefitted

them. Specifically, Thomas spoke about participating in community based organizations programs (CBO) at PCC that provided engagement and support. The CBO programs at Pinewood Community College are funded through private as well as local and state governmental agencies. Many of the CBO programs have a presence on Pinewood Community College's campus and offer services to students including: advisors who can assist participants with PCC's advisement and registration process, tutoring services, social service support and referrals, and career readiness training. Anthony spoke about being president of the *future teachers'* student club and his responsibilities to other student participants. Anthony announced "I was proud to be the President of the club and to be able to engage with students that had similar career interests. Our faculty advisor also helped us to bond with each other." Richie spoke about participating in *Get Done Now* (pseudonym), an accelerated program at the college that assists students in earning associate degrees within three years by providing a range of financial, academic, and personal supports including comprehensive and personalized advisement, career counseling, tutoring, waivers for tuition and mandatory fees, bus cards, and additional financial assistance to defray the cost of textbooks (TUS, 2016). Richie replied "Although I enjoyed participating in UMOCI, Get Done Now provided me with resources that were not available through UMOCI. I participated in both programs to benefit from all the available resources."

Program Administration and Staff--Aspects of the UMOCI program that were helpful to participants' advancement at Pinewood Community College were specific staff members including the program director. UMOCI participants used

words including: *cared, family, mentor, and support* to describe the UMOCI program

staff. Anthony spoke about the director of UMOCI as someone who "took money out

of his pocket so that I could participate in a conference after I graduated from

Pinewood Community College. He made sure students were exposed to things that

would help them. The UMOCI staff made sure we had access to things we needed

to be successful." Andre stated "often, we [UMOCI participants] would not have

money for food, so the director started bringing in cases of noodles and fruit for us to

eat." Thomas explained "if the director had to leave early, he would make

arrangements with the building janitor to allow us to stay in the office where we could

use the computers and have a place to do our homework. He set up a homework

hour, where we would meet in either the library or the UMOCI office and help each

other with homework. The director would also do his homework with us."

Student Life Activities--UMOCI participants demonstrated in their responses

that they benefited from student life activities at Pinewood Community College.

UMOCI participants spoke in great detail about their involvement and the benefits of

participating in student life activities. The participants concurred that they benefitted

from the opportunity to interact with their peers outside of the classroom.

Furthermore, participants indicated that through student activities, they were able to

meet and engage with other students they may not have been able to inside the

classroom. Don stated "I was unable to participate in all of the student activities due

to obligations with my kids; however, I was glad to see PCC offer activities for

students who could participate. I did try to participate in all of the UMOCI programs

and activities." Richie spoke about his role as SGA president and hosting activities

such as a Halloween party and a Thanksgiving celebration that had large student turnouts. Richie stated "although PCC is not able to offer many student activities due to its location and being a community college, me and the other SGA members tried to host events where all of the students could participate." These same students also commented on 'negative' aspects of their participation at Pinewood College.

<div align="center">**UMOCI Participants' Negative Comments**</div>

<u>Disorganization of the College and Specific Departments</u>--All of the UMOCI participants reported dissatisfaction with the lack of organization at Pinewood Community College which included: (a) lack of collaboration among departments and divisions, (b) lack of departmental procedures, and (c) layout and locations of administrative offices. When speaking about the layout and locations of administrative offices, participants spoke specifically about placement and locations of offices on the campus. Pinewood Community College is a 44-acre campus and there are two administrative buildings located on opposite sides of the campus.

Thomas' frustration with PCC was that: "Pinewood Community College is a place where people received the *run around*." Four of the five UMOCI participants specifically named the financial aid and advisement functions of the college as being disorganized noting that the departments as well as the staff performing duties and tasks were dysfunctional and caused the students to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy to move forward.

In addition, Thomas expressed the opinion that the functionality of the financial aid department was "archaic and a place where I wasted a lot of time,

which was terribly frustrating. As a student I had no options but to follow their suggestions, which were simply dead ends. I don't understand how an institution can treat students in this way. When I questioned the referral, I was told that 'that's the way it is.' Thomas expressed that he did not like being given a list of directions from the financial aid staff to complete his financial aid and not being personally guided through the process.

When describing the academic advisement center, many of the participants spoke negatively about the individual academic advisement they received. The first statement Don made about negative experiences at Pinewood Community College concerned the "lack of advisement." He specifically stated that the advisement staff was "ineffective and couldn't provide me with information on what classes I had to take." Anthony, a UMOCI participant who transferred to PCC, expressed disgruntlement when he explained: "Due to the disorganization at Pinewood Community College, I took an extra course that I had to pay for but was not necessary for graduation."

Richie spoke explicitly about the disorganization of the college's leadership. He commented about being a student government association member and the difficulties of working with the administrative leadership of the college, especially the VP of Student Services and the VP of Academic Affairs. Richie indicated that he tried hard to "represent the student body, but with the changes in Presidents and disagreements among administrators, at times students' best interests were not at the forefront."

Lack of Student Life Activities--Although most UMOCI participants revealed that they enjoyed student life activities, some respondents agreed that Pinewood Community College lacked student life activities. PCC's website lists: student clubs and organizations, leadership development, and student government association as potential activities for students to consider participation. Anthony stated "comparing PCC to my four-year institution, PCC lacks offering student life activities." He further stated that PCC does little to no student life activities. Anthony spoke about his accomplishment and joy of being the president of the Future Teachers Club and being the college's mascot, but he wished "more Black males had more student life activities to be a part of." Ritchie spoke about being an executive member on the SGA and attempting to create new student life opportunities for students he said, "we [SGA] members had lots of ideas for new activities for students at PCC; however, the President left and there were a lot of changes that occurred that didn't allow us to move forward with our SGA ideas."

Lack of Black Faculty--UMOCI participants spoke about their dissatisfaction with the lack of minority and specifically Black male faculty at the college. According to TUS (2016), 44.3% of Pinewood Community College's faculty are a minority, and 29% of the faculty are Black. Thomas stated that he "never had a Black teacher" while enrolled at PCC. Andre stated that he "had more Black female teachers than Black male teachers." Don replied that he "would have liked having more Black male teachers because they may have been able to relate to me." Although participants mentioned having more Black female instructors than Black male instructors, none discussed their roles and interactions with Black female instructors.

Klopfenstein (2005) stated, "Same race teachers may be more likely to initiate one-on-one mentoring relationships with Black students than non-Black teachers (p.5). Furthermore Klopfenstein indicated "African American teachers are able to communicate with African-American students about the personal value, the collective power and the political consequences of choosing academic achievements as opposed to failure. Such a communication process between African American teachers and students includes African –American teachers' ability to involve students in exchange which help students become empowered and involved in their own education" (p. 5).

Interview Question 2: Were there internal or external mechanisms (*skill building*) that helped you to successfully enter and graduate from Pinewood Community College?

UMOCI Participants' Internal Supports--When discussing internal support mechanisms that helped UMOCI participants graduate from Pinewood Community College, the participants overwhelmingly repeated and acknowledged similar support mechanisms that were mentioned as positive offerings at the institution that included: the UMOCI program and its staff/administrators, faculty, peers, student clubs, student life activities, and participation on student government association. In addition to the mentioned positive aspects of Pinewood Community College, UMOCI participants mentioned *mentorship*.

The majority of the UMOCI participants spoke about the mentorship they received through participating in the program specifically from the director. Andre, who works as an afterschool counselor, replied "the program director displayed traits

of mentorship that I have been able to use when dealing with my students." Anthony

responded

> I sought out mentorship and leadership programs when I
>
> enrolled at PCC. As soon as I got to PCC, I was told about
>
> UMOCI and immediately found that it was the right program for
>
> me. The director of the UMOCI was a great mentor to me while
>
> I was enrolled at PCC. Not only did he mentor me, he mentored
>
> all the members of the program.

Richie spoke about the director of the UMOCI program helping to guide him

through issues he was facing while being a member of the student government

association. Additionally, Richie indicated that he and the UMOCI director attended

a funeral of a PCC student representing the college. Richie said "there wasn't any

other administrator available to go with me but he went with me. It was raining hard,

but we were there together."

UMOCI Participants' External Support--One aspect of the Socio-Ecological

Outcomes Model (SEO) that has provided explanation to Black male success in

community college is *external support*. According to Harris III and Wood (2016)

"validating agents outside of campus who provide encouragement and support to

students, especially during challenging time, are important external mediators that

can counteract the negative effects of environmental commitments" (p. 40). When

speaking of external supports, all of the participants spoke of *family members and*

close friends as being factors contributing to their success. The participants

referenced their parents and grandparents as people who *encouraged* and

supported them to successfully graduate and pursue further education at a four-year university. UMOCI participants indicated that their parents and family members provided financial assistance and housing while attending Pinewood Community College. Richie and Don, the two fathers in the study, agreed that their children were external supports and a major influence on their completing their degree requirements at Pinewood Community College.

Interview Question 3: Were there internal or external barriers (*institutional support*) that made it difficult for you to successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College?

UMOCI Participants' Internal Barriers That Made It Difficult to Graduate-- Study respondents commonly acknowledged two internal barriers that made it difficult to graduate: *poor advisement* and *lack of organization of the campus and its operation.* Don indicated "advisement was so bad that I stopped going to the advisement office and asked for help from the UMOCI director and my peers. They provided me with more information than the people who worked in advisement." Anthony pointed out that he "had to take a loan to pay for an extra class to graduate" due to the college's internal organization. Anthony stated "I was advised that I had to take a particular class which I did and then found out that it wasn't mandatory." Richie replied "as a student government association member, I heard many stories from students about how PCC caused problems for them due to the college's disorganization." Richie further replied that the college "does a bad job guiding students from admissions to graduation, they don't tell you what you need to do."

UMOCI Participants' External Barriers that Made It Difficult to Graduate--

Unlike internal barriers, regardless of what group they were a part of, interviewees named a number of new external barriers that made it difficult to graduate from Pinewood Community College. Some of the noted barriers included: *finances, housing, peer pressure, family/children obligations.* Andre and Thomas concurred that they both faced barriers from peers outside of PCC trying to get them to *do the wrong thing.* Andre stated "my friends that were not doing anything with their lives would try to get me to hang out with them. They would try to make me feel bad for not hanging out with them when I had school work to do."

According to Harris and Wood (2016), *"The environmental domain* of the SEO model captures important student commitments that occur outside of the institution. These commitments may direct the time attention, and other resources of men of color away from their academic pursuits. Stressful life events such as a divorce, death in the family, eviction/homeless, or job loss, are also situated in the environmental domain" (p. 39-40). Richie and Anthony concurred that they had to work several part-time jobs due to lacking finances and housing. During Anthony's interview, he stated "after my Grandmother died, I had to get another job to pay for this apartment." Both of the father's in the study discussed balancing their obligations to their children with school work as a barrier they had to overcome while attending PCC. Don indicated "I did not know the college had a child care center until I was about to graduate. It would have been helpful to know about it sooner. Richie replied "it was hard taking care of school stuff and making sure my son was ok, but I did what I had to do."

Interview Question 4: What experiences did you have as a Black male at Pinewood Community College that made your formal and informal processes more difficult or easier (*nurturing*) than someone who is a Non-black male?

UMOCI Participants' Easiness of Being a Black Male Compared to Other Races/Ethnicities at Pinewood Community College--The majority of the UMOCI participants felt it would have been *easier being a Hispanic*, male or female, rather than a Black male at Pinewood Community College. They felt it was easier for Hispanics to communicate with one another simply because they spoke Spanish. Don struggled to find words to respond and finally confirmed that "if you are Hispanic at PCC, it's easier. Many students speak Spanish to each other leaving Blacks out of the conversation. It [Spanish] is like the main language on the campus."

One participant replied that it was easier for Black males at Pinewood Community College because many teachers lowered academic expectations of Black males. Thomas indicated "many teachers, especially non-Black teachers, lower expectations of Black males. Some [teachers] don't think Black males have the ability to be successful so they lower the expectations of them [Black males]."

UMOCI Participants' Difficulties of Being a Black Male at Pinewood Community College--UMOCI participants expressed difficulties being a Black male at Pinewood Community College. They concurred that there were *more opportunities made available for Hispanic students*, that they were *forced to adjust to Hispanic cultures and languages*, that they *experienced faculty who were surprised at their high academic accomplishments*, and *had encounters with faculty who displayed signs of being intimidated*. Don indicated that he had encounters with

Hispanics from other countries that had "no understanding of Black culture.

Sometimes some Hispanic students seemed uncomfortable to be around us [Black

males]." Thomas, whose academic accomplishments included graduating from PCC

with a 3.93 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 grade scale, stated that "some

professors appeared surprised at my and other Black males' academic

accomplishments, especially non-Black professors." Andre, who is more than 6 feet

tall, replied "most professors were initially intimidated by me. I think part of it was my

height and that I was a Black man. I think students who are not Black men, did not

have the same experience I did at PCC. Although I think I had a better experience

with my teachers once they got to know me better, it was hard breaking the ice with

them when they first saw me and didn't know anything about me."

Interview Question 5: What further institutional support (*formal and

informal*) would you suggest to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood

Community College?

UMOCI Participants' Suggestions--The researcher asked the Black male

participants to provide suggestions and recommendations that might help more

Black Males successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College and asked

the following question: *What further recommendations (support systems, programs,

etc.) would you suggest to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood

Community College?*

UMOCI Participants provided shared wide variety of suggestions that they felt

could help more Black males graduate from Pinewood Community College. The

suggestions included: *expanding current and creating more programs for Black*

males, general counseling/training for staff as well as for the students, improving

college leadership interacting with students, providing more student life

activities/engagement, hiring more Black male faculty and counselors, and better

overall organization of the institution.

Expanding current and creating more programs for Black males--The

UMOCI participants concurred that the UMOCI program was vital to their success

and believed that the program could have a positive effect on future Black males'

success at PCC. The participants suggested that more programs such as the

UMOCI program and as well as other similar support programs geared specifically to

the African American community could have a positive effect on the success of

Black males at Pinewood Community College.

Anthony indicated that he would like to see more mentoring programs offered

to Black males attending PCC through the UMOCI program. Richie wanted to see

the UMOCI program expand to teach more about Black history and culture to Black

males at PCC. He stated: "Blacks don't know enough about their history and

culture, including African and West Indian cultures." Thomas replied that more

programs should be established to help Black males be successful in Reading and

Math as "those are the classes that Black males struggle in and hinder their

graduation." Furthermore, Thomas commented on his experience in participating in

the community based organization (CBO) programs at Pinewood Community

College. Thomas implied that he participated in a local municipal CBO program that

had a presence on Pinewood Community College's campus. The CBO program

provided comprehensive, year-round support to college students. Students who

participate in the CBO program worked one-on-one with college advisors who offered individualized guidance each step of the way to graduation. Assistance provided by the CBO college advisors include: coaching students through the transition to college, visiting them on campus, helping them select a major and pick courses that aligned with their long-term career goals, helping them identify on-campus supports and resources as needed, and reaching out to professors and other stakeholders to discuss student progress and strategies for success.

General Counseling/Training--UMOCI participants suggested that *general counseling* should be provided to Black males. Specifically, they suggested the following types of counseling services: *on-board-enrollment counseling, and career and job readiness training.* Thomas noted that the on-boarding process for all students at Pinewood Community College, especially Black male students, should include a questionnaire "asking students about their needs like employment and housing." Thomas further indicated that he had participated in some career and job readiness workshops through one of the Community Based Organization programs at PCC that teamed him up with a mentor in the field. Thomas said "the program asked me about my career interests upon entering the program" and he felt that it is something that should be done across the campus. Richie pointed out that he thought that counselors need to be trained to better advise Black males so that Pinewood Community College could better "understand the needs of Black males." Richie further expressed that advisors that work with Black males should be on-going and not just to select classes. Richie stated "selecting classes only happens

twice a year, the advisors should be more like counselors, helping students throughout the year."

College leadership interacting with students--Two UMOCI participants, Anthony and Don, concurred that they thought that the senior administration such as the dean and vice presidents at Pinewood Community College should have more interaction with Black males who attend the college. They pointed out that they experienced little to no interaction with members of the senior administrative staff.

Anthony suggested that senior administration should do some type of retreat with Black males to better understand their needs. He stated "they [Black males] might feel more comfortable talking with them [college administrators'] if they are in a more relaxed setting." Furthermore, Anthony suggested that the college improve its social media presence and find other outlets to better communicate with students. Anthony suggested that the college institute a 24-hour chat/email component to its website that would allow students to interact with the college 24 hours-a-day.

More Student Life Activities/Engagement--The majority of the UMOCI participants at Pinewood Community College revealed that they enjoyed participating in student life activities. They concurred that the activities allowed them the opportunity to engage with other peers that were like and could relate to them. All of the UMOCI participants agreed that the institution is in need of more student life activities and engagement. They thought it would help increase the number of Black males graduates at Pinewood Community College.

This then is the summary of questions to those participants who were part of the UMOCI at Pinewood College; now we turn to the non-UMOCI participants and their stories concerning the five interview questions.

Group 2 – Non-UMOCI Participant Responses

The second group of participants was comprised of five male graduates who

were not student members of the UMOCI program at Pinewood Community College

(Table 2). Pseudonyms have been given to each participant to assure

confidentiality. The researcher provides a brief background on each participant to

give the reader more insight on participants individually.

Table 2

Geographical Overview of Non-UMOCI Participants

Pseudonym	#6 - KJ	#7 - DayShawn	#8 – Roy	#9 - Michael	#10 - Jimmy
Age	25	21	27	33	30
Enrollment Status	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time
Employment Status	Full-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	Unemployed	Part-Time
Marital Status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
Children	No	No	No	No	No
Goal Entering College	Transfer to 4-year College	Earning 60 Credits/Not Transferring	Transfer to 4-year College	Transfer to 4-Year College	Transfer to 4-Year College
Grade Point Average (GPA)	Under 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0	Under 3.0	Over 3.0
Year of Enrollment	2014	2013	2013	2006/2012	2013
Year of Completion	2016	2016	2015	2016	2014
Remedial Courses	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Funding Source	FA	SP	Loans	FA	FA/SP

Interview Question 1: What would you consider to be positive and negative

aspects (*discontinuity*) of being a student at Pinewood Community College?

The responses received from Black male non-UMOCI participants regarding

positive aspects of being a student at Pinewood Community College included:

faculty, engagement with peers, participating in particular programs, program administrators and staff, student life activities, and diversity of the student population.

The responses received from Black male non-UMOCI participants regarding negative aspects of being a student at Pinewood Community College included: *disorganization of the college and specific departments, lack of student life activities, and tuition increases.* The following provides the reader with an in-depth understanding of the participants' responses to positive and negative aspects of being a Black male who graduated from Pinewood Community College.

Positive Aspects of Being a Black Male non-UMOCI Participant
at Pinewood Community College

Faculty: Similar to UMOCI participants, non-UMOCI participants reported that their interactions with faculty at Pinewood Community College were positive. Participants concurred that faculty members were accessible, easy to communicate with, and provided them with individual attention. DayShawn and Roy both mentioned that it made them *feel good* when a faculty member addressed them by name. Jimmy indicated that he felt that most of the faculty members were "approachable" and easy to talk to about both school and personal issues. Jimmy spoke about two teachers that he built personal relationships with that have continued to help him with career and education decisions. He further expressed that it was those same two faculty members that were instrumental in his becoming an adjunct lecturer at Pinewood Community College. Roy stated "faculty would take time to help me outside of class and their office hours." When speaking about

accessibility to faculty, participants spoke specifically about accessibility to individual faculty members and not the location of faculty offices. Faculty office locations were mentioned as a negative aspect of being a student at Pinewood Community College and will be further discussed in the negative aspects section in this chapter.

Engagement with Peers: Some non-UMOCI participants spoke of peer-engagement as a positive aspect of Pinewood Community College. Peer engagement was identified as interactions with other students who participated in student support programs offer at the college, student life clubs, and student government association. There were some participants, however, who revealed that they were not able to engage with their peers outside of class because of personal responsibilities including raising children and work obligations. DayShawn indicated that although he wanted to have more engagement with his peers, he was unable to do so due to his work schedule. DayShawn replied "I worked more than 30 hours a week and attended PCC, I did not have time to engage with my peers." KJ, stated in his interview, "Although I didn't engage with many students throughout the campus, I spent a lot of time engaging with students who participated in [Help Move Forward (HMF)]." HMF (pseudonym) is a retention and graduation program designed to help motivate Pinewood Community College students achieve their personal and educational goals (PCC, 2016) funded by the local city. The HMF program provides assistance to college students who are low-income and social service recipients. Roy stated that he made "life-long friends" through engagement with student government association peers at Pinewood Community College.

Participating in Particular Programs: Some non-UMOCI participants spoke about other support programs that they felt were a positive aspect of Pinewood Community College and contributed to their successful persistence. Non-UMOCI participants found that being a member of specific programs and student organizations allowed them to be a part of a group of similar peers who understood them.

Roy spoke about being part of the student government association and the activities he and other members did together to "represent the student body and better the campus community." KJ spoke specifically about the Help Move Forward program at PCC and his engagement with both his peers and the administrative staff of the program. Although not an active member of UMOCI, KJ indicated that he found it beneficial to students that the UMOCI and HMF programs, "partnered up to be help more students be successful." The author notes that both the UMOCI and HMF programs are support programs offered at Pinewood Community College; however, they have different missions. The mission of UMOCI narrowly focuses on supporting minority male persistence while the HMF has a mission and is restricted to assist students who are low-income students and/or receive social service assistance.

Program Administration and Staff: When non-UMOCI participants discussed aspects of particular programs that were most helpful to their continued persistence at Pinewood Community College, the participants often named particular staff members. Furthermore, non-UMOCI participants spoke positively about specific directors and support staff of overseeing programs and clubs they

participated in at PCC. When describing the programs' staff and administrators, non-UMOCI participant used words including *cared, family, and support*. KJ spoke specifically about an administrator who "shared personal resources" and "made opportunities available." KJ indicated that the administrator "took money out of her own pocket to make sure we had transportation money to get to school. She brought college recruiters to talk to us and treated us like we were her kids." Roy replied "the SGA advisor [a staff member at Pinewood Community College] built a personal relationship with us [student government association members] personally. [The SGA advisor] worked closely with us, went on trips with us, and helped us process paperwork. [The SGA advisor] was more like a close friend."

Student Life Activities: Nearly all of the non-UMOCI participants who participated in student life activities agreed that they benefited from participating in student life activities at Pinewood Community College. Non-UMOCI participants concurred that student life activities contributed to their persistence at PCC by providing them with the opportunity to have activities to participate in when they had downtime. The student life activities that participants concurred that they participated in included *student clubs* and *student government association*. Michael indicated that being part of the Veteran Affairs club "provided me with support dealing with my PTSD. I was among others who understood what I was going through. We were able to talk about our times in the service and supported each other while we attended college." Roy replied that he made "life-long friends" through engagement with student government association peers at Pinewood Community College.

Diversity of the Student Population: Some non-UMOCI participants pointed out that the diversity of the Hispanic student population at Pinewood Community College enhanced their learning experience while attending the college. This response is reflective of the overall student population of PCC. According to IPEDS (2016) 64% of Pinewood Community College's overall student population is Hispanic and 28% of the college's overall student population is African American/Black. The Hispanic student population is comprised of students from various Hispanic and Latin countries including Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, South America, and Mexico. Furthermore, the African American/Black student population consists of students from various West Indian and African countries as well as the United States. KJ and Roy both spoke about the diversity among the Hispanic and African students' cultures who attend Pinewood Community College. KJ specifically spoke about being from another region of the county and not being familiar with the diversity of Hispanic cultures until attending PCC. KJ stated "at PCC, I was able to engage with Dominicans, Blacks, and Puerto Ricans and learn about various cultures."

Negative Aspects of Being a Black Male Student at Pinewood Community College

Disorganization of the College and Specific Departments: Similar to the UMOCI participants, non-participants reported dissatisfaction with the lack of organization at the institution. Participants spoke of lack of collaboration among departments and divisions, functionality within a department, and layout and locations of administrative offices. Jimmy offered this explanation "PCC has more

than eleven thousand students and they only have three people helping students at the financial aid counter." One participant spoke of the disorganization and placement/locations of offices on the campus. The participant indicated that although the faculty were helpful and accessible, the offices of faculty were "spread out and all over the campus. If you did not follow your teacher back to their [the teacher's] office, you might have to search all over the campus to find them."

When discussing the staff in the financial aid department, the majority of the participants agreed that staff members were both unpleasant to deal with as well as unable to provide clear directions. Jimmy pointed out that the staff is "usually unavailable and never reachable by phone. The [financial aid] department is mostly staffed by college assistants." DayShawn commented further on the disorganization and service offered by Pinewood Community College administrative offices stating "many offices at Pinewood Community College would not answer the phone and provided poor customer service. The workers were not pleasant to speak with and usually could not answer my questions."

Roy, like Anthony, a UMOCI participant, argued he had received incorrect advisement and had taken an unnecessary course due to the lack of organization at Pinewood Community College. Roy expressed dissatisfaction with paying for an extra, unnecessary course that was not required for graduation.

When referring to the disorganization of the college, Ron, a member of the student government association stated that he was "very vocal both in SGA meetings and at meetings with Pinewood Community College about the poor service and disorganization. I think they [Pinewood Community College administration]

were aware of the poor service that we [Pinewood Community College students']
received; however, when a new President took office at PCC and it became harder
to make changes for the student body."

Lack of Student Life Activities: Although the majority of participants in both
groups agreed that they liked and enjoyed student life activities, similarly,
respondents Roy and KJ spoke about their dissatisfaction with the open hours and
times available for students to participate in student life activities. KJ and Ron spoke
about overlapping student life activities due to an established "club hour" at PCC.
Ron replied that he "would have liked to be a part of" more activities, but due to his
obligations with tutoring and student government association, he had little to no time
to participate in other activities." Ron further expressed that he did not like that the
college had an Olympic size pool that was unusable as well as a gym with little to no
open hours to students due to being used for physical education courses. Ron
indicated that while he was on the SGA, they fought to get the open-hours of the
gym extended for student use; however, he stated "I have heard that the extended
hours has decreased again since we [SGA members] and the athletic director have
left Pinewood Community College.

Tuition Increases: Two non-UMOCI participants disliked the increased
tuition at Pinewood Community College. DayShawn and Roy adamantly expressed
being upset about having to pay more tuition for the same classes and poor service
from the campus.   DayShawn concurred "after the increase by PCC, I looked at my
bill and I could see where I was paying more for the same amount of classes I was
taking before. They [Today University System and Pinewood Community College]

act like they did not care about the tuition cost. It's not them paying for tuition. I had to work more hours to pay for classes."

Interview Question 2: Were there internal or external mechanisms (*skill building*) that helped you to successfully enter and graduate from Pinewood Community College?

Next, the researcher asked each participant to talk about internal and external supports that helped them to successfully graduate from the college. Specifically, the researchers asked non-UMOCI participants the following question: Were there internal or external mechanisms that helped you to successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College?

The responses received from non-UMOCI participants regarding external support that helped them to graduate included: *family members and close friends*. The responses received from Black male participants regarding external support that helped them to successfully graduate from the northeast Hispanic serving community college included: *particular programs, staff and administrators of a particular program, faculty, peers, participating on student government association and/or a club, participating in student life activities, and support services*.

Black male participants in this study, regardless of participating in UMOCI or not, provided similar responses to internal and external supports that helped them to successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College.

External Support: When speaking of external supports to successfully graduating from Pinewood Community College, all of the participants spoke of *family members and close friends* being factors of their success. Specifically, participants

offered that their family members and close friends provided them with encouragement, emotional support, and financial support that helped them to successfully graduate. Roy indicated that he lived with his Mother while he attended PCC and she at times "gave me money to get to school." Although the majority of the participants referenced their parents and family as people who encouraged and pushed them to successfully graduate and pursue furthering their education at a four-year university, one participant indicated that co-workers and friends were a support to him successfully graduating. KJ referenced his family as being an encouraging support to his graduating; however, he also expressed that people at his job and internship site "continued to follow-up on my school progress. They knew that my family was in another state and became my local support team."

Internal Supports: The responses provided by UMOCI interviewees about positive aspects of Pinewood Community College were similar to non-UMOCI participants in this study when asked about internal supports that helped them to successfully graduate. The overwhelmingly repeated responses about positive internal supports that helped non-UMOCI participants successfully persist and graduate from Pinewood Community College included: a particular program, staff and administrators of a particular program, faculty, peers, and participating on student government association, and participating in student life activities/clubs.

Support Services: Black male non-UMOCI participants in this study concurred that support services at Pinewood Community College were instrumental to their successful persistence and graduation. DayShawn stated that he was "referred to the writing center by a teacher, and it helped a lot. I knew about the

services at PCC; however, I never used them until my teacher made it mandatory.

My grade improved in his class and my other classes." Roy, who is a math tutor,

stated "there are some great people who work in the math tutoring center who help

students. Students really should use the services in the math center and in places

like the writing center to get some help." Michael indicated "I appreciated the

services that the Veteran Affairs office provided me dealing with PTSD. Participating

in the Veteran Affairs clubs allowed me to interact with other students who were

experiencing some of the same issues that I was having."

Interview Question 3: Were there internal or external barriers (*institutional*

support) that made it difficult for you to successfully graduate from Pinewood

Community College?

After allowing the non-UMOCI Black male participants to provide responses

about internal and external supports that helped their successful persistence and

graduation from Pinewood Community College, the researcher asked each

participant to discuss internal and external barriers that made it difficult for them to

graduate from the college. Specifically, the researcher asked non-UMOCI

participants to discuss *barriers (internal or external) that made it difficult for*

successful graduation from Pinewood Community College.

Much like the responses of non-UMOCI participants regarded *internal*

supports as *positive aspects* that helped them to successfully persist and graduate

from Pinewood Community College. Participant's responses were similar about

internal barriers and *negative aspects* of the college that made it difficult for them to

persist and graduate.

During the interviews, a barrier that the researcher classified as both an internal and external barrier mentioned by several participants was *balancing personal and school obligations.* Although participants commonly agreed that they improved their time management and prioritization skills while attending Pinewood Community College, they also pointed out that it was a barrier to their persistence and graduation from the college. The most common personal obligation that had to be balanced by non-UMOCI participants was work obligations. DayShawn mentioned it was difficult balancing working 30 hours per week and completing class assignments. He further stated "some of my teachers thought I was being lazy but I was too tired to put effort into some of my projects and assignments."

The responses from non-UMOCI participants regarding internal barriers to their graduation from Pinewood Community College included: *lack of organization and access to resources.* Furthermore, the same participants acknowledged the following as external barriers to their persistence and graduation from PCC included: *lack of finances, housing, and transportation to school.*

Internal Barriers: Lack of Organization and Access to Support Services:
Non-UMOCI participants, much like UMOCI participants agreed that they found Pinewood Community College to be generally disorganized. However, non-UMOCI participants spoke of *course scheduling* and *office hours of support services.* DayShawn indicated

> I had a difficult time in my last semester scheduling classes
> because I paid my tuition without financial aid and by the time I had
> the money, the classes I needed were closed. I had to wait for

students to get dropped from classes before I could register for the

classes I needed. I had to adjust my work schedule to

accommodate the times of the available classes.

Roy expressed that he considered Pinewood Community College to be

disorganized due to the hours of the support services for students. He

pointed out that although he was a tutor on campus, he and other students

did not have access to the resources such as computers and printers at

home. He further responded that many of the office hours for support

services catered more to day students and not night and weekend students.

Roy stated:

> I was on the night and weekend student committee while I was
>
> a member of the SGA. We [SGA night and weekend
>
> committee] were working on extending hours of support
>
> services and a laptop loaner program for night and weekend
>
> students. When the new President of PCC started, we lost the
>
> night and weekend dean part of some budget cuts and we [SGA
>
> members] were not able to get the hours extended or start the
>
> laptop loan program.

External Barriers that Made It Difficult to Graduate: Non-UMOCI

participants, similar to UMOCI participants, indicated balancing work and school

responsibilities as well as a lack of finances as an external barrier that made it

difficult to graduate from Pinewood Community College. In addition to external

barriers mentioned, two non-UMOCI participants named transportation to school as

an external barrier Michael stated "I had to take an hour train ride to Pinewood Community College. Once I got to the stop closest to the school I had a long walk to the campus. PCC has a bus shuttle, but it only runs in the evening." Ron also commented on the transportation options to Pinewood Community College and stated "[public] transportation wasn't convenient for me to get to PCC."

Interview Question 4: What experiences did you have as a Black male at Pinewood Community College that made your formal and informal processes more difficult or easier (*nurturing*) than someone who is a Non-black male?

Non-UMOCI Participants' Difficulties of Being a

Black Male at Pinewood Community College

When non-UMOCI participants responded to the question What experiences as a Black male at Pinewood Community College made the process more difficult or easier than someone who is a non-black male? , they only spoke about the difficulty of not being a Hispanic at the college. Michael, expressed that he did not have a comment about what was either easy or difficult being a Black male at Pinewood Community College. Participants who did respond to the question only focused on culture and difficulty of not being able to communicate in Spanish. Similarly, DayShawn stated "the campus is mostly Hispanic; I think it's like 75% Hispanic. It is a lot easier being able to talk to other students if you know Spanish because a lot of students speak Spanish at PCC. I had to assimilate to the Hispanic culture at PCC." None of the participants spoke about an aspect of being easier as a Black male attending the college.

Interview Question 5: What further institutional support (*formal and informal*) would you suggest to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood Community College?

Non-UMOCI Participants' Suggestions

Finally, the researcher asked non-UMOCI participants to provide suggestions and recommendations that might help more Black males successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College. The researcher asked participants the following question: *What further recommendations (support systems, programs, etc.) would you suggest to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood Community College?* The suggestions included: *expanding current and creating more programs for Black males, on-board training, more student life activities/engagement, better organization of the institution.*

Expand Current and Create More Programs for Black males: Four of the five non-UMOCI participants were aware of the UMOCI program and events the program sponsored at Pinewood Community College. Furthermore, some participants concurred that they participated in either the Black college bus trip to Morgan State University and to Howard University or a music/entertainment workshop that was sponsored by UMOCI. Non-UMOCI participants that spoke about the program spoke positively and thought the program was vital to the advancement of Black male success at PCC.

Roy indicated that as an alumni and former member of Pinewood Community College's student government association, he would like to see more funding provided by the college to have more students participate in UMOCI or a similar

program. Roy further expressed that he voted for funding to be disbursed from the student government association funds to support UMOCI members' attendance at a conference.

Another non-UMOCI participant pointed out that he believed a Black male mentor program should be established at Pinewood Community College. Jimmy stated

> Although I did not have to take a remedial course, I know that a lot of Black males at PCC had to take them. Pinewood Community College should create mentorship programs where Black males can be teamed up with a mentor. When they [Black males] receive low grades, often times they [Black males] want to drop out. If they [Black males] had a mentor to encourage them, maybe they would stay and finish.

On-Board and Continued Skills Building Training: Non-UMOCI participants suggested that on-board and continued skills building training be provided to Black males to help them to persist and graduate from Pinewood Community College. When describing *on-board training*, participants described a comprehensive introduction to services offered by the college. The non-UMOCI participants concurred that on-board training should include teaching new students skills to successfully persist academically. Furthermore, the participants agreed that on-board training should include assistance-connecting students to majors to personal interests and career goals. Jimmy indicated that Pinewood Community College should teach entering students how to *be a successful college student.*

Jimmy further stated "many students entering the college do not know what it means to be a college student and what is expected of them."

Participants suggested the following types of skills building for Black males at PCC: *self-help/life skills training, parenting skills training, budgeting/financing training, life skills training*. Roy revealed that he believed that Black males at Pinewood Community College might be able to advance if they had more "life skills" training on how to deal with things that affect their lives outside of school. Roy stated "many of the students are fathers, in need of a job or better job, have problems communicating, and just need help."

More Student Life Activities/Engagement: Some of the non-UMOCI participants attested that they believe more Black males would be able to graduate from Pinewood Community College if more student life activities were offered at the institution. Non-UMOCI participants who participated in either a particular support program or club while attending Pinewood Community College provided this response. Non-UMOCI participants spoke about student life activities as a place where they were able to engage with students who had common interests and backgrounds. Furthermore, participants revealed that the student life activities were important for meeting PCC faculty and staff members who provided encouragement and support, which aided their persisting at the college. Non-UMOCI participants believed that other Black males' might have the same types of experiences if they would participate in student life activities at the College.

Although, non-UMOCI participants recommended that more Black males should participate in student life activities, they commented on the small number and

lack of variety of student life activities offered at the college. Ron stated "many of

the activities outside of clubs are offered through specific programs to students at

PCC. I've heard that certain programs have taken students on trips out of town and

to events like plays; however, it was only open to students who participated in the

program."

Table 3

*Comparison of Responses Received by UMOCI Participants to Non-UMOCI
Participants*

Research Question	Common UMOCI Responses	Common Non-UMOCI Responses
1. What would you consider to be positive and negative aspects of being a student at Pinewood Community College?	**Positive Aspects of Pinewood Community College**: 1. Faculty 2. Engagement with peers 3. Participating in UMOCI 4. Program administrators and staff 5. Student life activities 6. Diversity of the student population	**Positive Aspects of Pinewood Community College**: 1. Faculty 2. Engagement with peers 3. Participating in student support programs 4. Program administrators and staff 5. Student life activities 6. Diversity of the student population
	Negative Aspects of Pinewood Community College: 1. Disorganization of the college and specific departments 2. Lack of student life activities 3. Lack of Black faculty	**Negative Aspects of Pinewood Community College**: 1. Disorganization of the college and specific departments 2. Lack of student life activities 3. Tuition increases
2. Were there internal or external mechanisms that helped you to successfully enter and graduate from Pinewood Community College?	**Internal Support Mechanisms:** 1. UMOCI program and its staff/administrators 2. Faculty 3. Peers 4. Student clubs and student life activities 5. Participation on student government association	**Internal Support Mechanisms:** 1. Particular programs 2. Staff and administrators of a particular program 3. Faculty 4. Peers 5. Participating in student government association and clubs 6. Participating in student life activities 7. Mentors 8. Support services
	External Support Mechanisms: 1. Family and close friends	**External Support Mechanisms:** 1. Family and Close Friends
3. Were there internal or external barriers that made it difficult for you to successfully graduate from Pinewood Community College?	**Internal Barriers:** 1. Poor advisement 2. Lack of organization of the college	**Internal Barriers:** 1. Lack of organization of the college 2. Access to resources
	External Barriers: 1. Finances 2. Housing 3. Peer pressure 4. Family/children obligations	**External Barriers:** 1. Lack of finances 2. Housing 3. Transportation to school

4. What experiences did you have as a Black male at Pinewood Community College that made your formal and informal processes more difficult or easier than someone who is a Non-black male?	**More Difficult:** 1. Not being Hispanic 2. Not speaking Spanish 3. Being a Black male in general	**More Difficult:** 1. Not Being Hispanic
5. What further institutional support would you suggest to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood Community College?	**Participants Recommendations** 1. Expanding current and creating more programs for Black males 2. General counseling/training 3. College leadership interacting with students 4. More student life activities/engagement 5. Hiring more Black faculty and counselors 6. Better organization of the institution	**Participants Recommendations** 1. Expanding current and creating more programs for Black males 2. On-board training 3. More student life activities/engagement 4. Better organization of the institution

Table (3) is a summary analysis of the responses by UMOCI participants to

non-UMOCI participants for each of the research questions. There is no question

about the similarities of the responses of the two groups; in fact, the data indicate

that the two groups' responses were nearly identical in terms of positive and

negative aspects (Padilla's concept of "discontinuity") of being a student at

Pinewood. As the director of the UMOCI program, I expected that the non-UMOCI

participants would have had somewhat different responses since they had not

participated in a program that was designed specifically for African American males.

However, that not being the case, Padilla's LMSMS model was very helpful in

understanding this very significant finding.

Reflecting on Padilla's (1997) model and specifically on "discontinuity" factors,

these factors were only barriers if students had dropped out, stopped out and/or

never graduated. That was not the case in this study. All students eventually graduated whether a participant or non-participant in the UMOCI program. They came to the institution understanding that there were formal (institutional) factors, which would affect their success, and they managed to overcome those factors (barriers) as they went through their respective programs. Therefore, the formal (institutional) barriers did not hinder student success.

Looking at the negative aspects (discontinuity) of UMOCI and non-UMOCI students at PCC, demonstrated similarities as they explained lack of activities that supported their admission and progressive continuity toward graduation, no doubt as an effect of institutional "disorganization". The difference between them was that UMOCI student began the refrain that they would continue throughout their interviews concerning the lack of Black faculty who would serve as role models. The non-UMOCI students also began their own discussion about finances that could have eroded their continuance enrollment.

From Padilla's perspective, discontinuity (positive and negative aspects) was not a debilitating barrier for students in either group. This reference to discontinuity would have been barriers if students had dropped out, stopped out, and/or did not graduate.

By comparing the UMOCI and non-UMOCI student responses it was evident that support systems and the students' abilities to develop skills requisite to program progress were completely similar as seen in their responses referencing special programs, positive relationships to faculty, staff, and administrators, involvement in student government and student activities. Only non-UMOCI students explained

their reliance on mentors and specific support programs. This researcher understood that the UMOCI students' LSM program took the place of this support.

The author was somewhat amazed at the fictive "family" that emerged from both sets of participants who saw external support in terms of developing a replacement family to aid in their college matriculation. This was in keeping with Padilla's concept of students' replacing formal support systems with informal ones.

There is no question that organizational barriers (poor advising, resource acquisition) prevented smooth transition from student to graduate in both cases of participants. However, what did emerge were the students' descriptions of obligations in the form of family responsibilities, money, housing, pressure from peers (UMOCI), and transportation (non-UMOCI).

The responses from both groups focused on "not being Hispanic." This acknowledged the researcher's assumption and experience; I had suspected that this issue was overwhelming as a response and became a "warning" light for what it would take for Black males to be successful at PCC.

Recommendations were pointed at bringing greater support and aid to Black males in specifically designed programs for student success—training, hiring more Black faculty, identification of issues that might arise out of predominant ethnic discrepancies (Hispanic verses Black), and increased student engagement (as in Kuh's model). Analysis of these recommendations focused on Padilla (1997) and discovery of informal issues that conflicted with formal and institutional issues. In chapter 5 the author will elaborate on these conflicts.

Conclusion

The participants in this collective case study were Black males who successfully graduated who may or may not have participated in a minority male initiative program at Pinewood Community College. Through semi-structured interviews, participants provided the researcher with information and data about their experiences being a Black male attending a Northeast Hispanic Serving Community College. Chapter IV presented the results of this study about participants': (a) experiences in general at the institution, (b) likes and dislikes about their experiences at the institution, (c) internal and external supports that helped them successfully graduate from the institution, (d) barriers, internal and external, they faced while completing their Associate degree, (e) feelings about being a Black male compared to other races/ethnicities/genders while attending the institution, and (f) recommendations to help more Black males graduate from Pinewood Community College. Chapter V presents conclusions based on the findings presented in chapter IV and offers recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of Black males who graduated from a Hispanic-serving institution and who may or may not have participated in Urban Men of Color Initiative (UMOCI), a minority male initiative program. This study sought to answer the major research question that guided the study: *What are the experiences of Black males who participated in a minority male initiative program and successfully graduated from a Hispanic-serving community college compared to Black males who did not participate in a minority male initiative program and successfully graduated from a Hispanic-serving community college?*

According to Creswell, "one of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This usually means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard" (2014, p. 29). This study employed interview protocol to gather data from UMOCI and non-UMOCI Black male participants who both had graduated from Pinewood Community College.

The local model of successful minority students (LMSMS) provided the conceptual framework for this study (Padilla et al., 1997). LMSMS advanced Padilla's (1991, 1994) model of successful college students theory identified barriers related to minority students' success at a single post-secondary institution. Utilizing Padilla's et al., (1997) local model of successful minority students as the lens, the researcher explored the experiences of 10 Black men at a Hispanic-serving

community college who successfully overcame barriers and successfully graduated. The participants fell into two groups: five black males who participated in UMOCI constituted one group and five Black males who were non-UMOCI participants constituted the other.

The five interview questions were developed to allow the researcher to understand of the experiences of Black males at the northeast Hispanic-serving community college. The answers to the questions provided information about:

- positive and negative aspects of being a Black male at the institution,

- internal and external barriers faced by Black males who successfully graduated,

- internal and external supports systems that helped the participants to overcome barriers and successfully graduate,

- experiences Black males had compared to other ethnicities (especially Hispanic males) that impacted their ability to graduate from a Hispanic-serving institution, and

- additional supports Black males believed could assist more Black males graduate from the institution.

Answers to the questions allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of Black males who responded with direct knowledge and insight. Common themes emerged that led the researcher to organize the findings and to develop implications concerning Black males who successfully graduated from Pinewood Community College.

Discussion

The findings presented in Chapter IV produced four general themes that aided in the understanding of the experiences of Black males who successfully persisted to graduation at Pinewood Community College. Black males experienced positive and inclusive experiences throughout their experience at Pinewood Community College:

1. Black males demonstrated positive regard for internal relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff

2. Black males explained their positive regard for participation in student life activities and cohort support programs as positive

3. Black males acknowledged that "lacking organizational structure" discourages and sometimes impedes their progress toward graduation

Table 4 displays themes that emerged and indicates whether the participant referred to them during the semi-structured interview.

Table 4 – Participant groups identified according to referenced themes

UMOCI Participants				
Name	Positive and inclusive experience	Positive regard for internal relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff	Positive regard for participation in student life activities and cohort support programs	Lack of organizational structure discouraged and sometime impeded their progress toward graduation
Anthony	X	X	X	X
Richie	X	X	X	X
Andre	X	X	X	X
Don	X	X	X	X
Thomas	X	X	X	X
Non-UMOCI Participants				
Name	Positive and inclusive experience	Positive regard for internal relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff	Positive regard for participation in student life activities and cohort support programs	Lack of organizational structure discouraged and sometime impeded their progress toward graduation
KJ	X	X	X	X
Dayshawn		X		X
Roy	X	X	X	X
Michael		X	X	
Jimmy	X	X		X

Theme 1:

Black males experienced positive and inclusive experiences throughout

college

Pinewood Community College created and offered support programs for Black males that enabled them to identify and feel a sense of connection with similar peers. The data suggests that Black males at PCC who participated in programs designed for students with commonalities resulted in their continued persistence and graduation. The data suggests that Black males at PCC who participated in support programs with peers with whom they could identify, resulted in a positive impact on their continued persistence and graduation. Furthermore, the data suggests that the more engagement Black males had with their peers in specialized and cohort support programs, the more likely they were to successfully graduate. Padilla's Local Model of Minority Student Success the conceptual frame work used in this study, implies that successful minority students actively participate in ethnic student organizations, draw people in to them by making themselves known on campus, and develop their academic skills (1997).

Although Anderson (1995) found that college students face a barrier either locating or being provided with information about support programs offered at an institution, Black males in this study seemed to overcome this barrier because they entered the institution by having previously been connected to the specialized program or by having learned about support programs through engagement with peers upon entering the college. Learning about support programs through *word of mouth* engagement with peers was mentioned during interviews. Andre, for

example, stated "I was introduced to the [UMOCI] program through a college assistant who works in the program. She told me that the program was doing a bunch of great things and I should come and check it out."

Black males in this study who had the opportunity to engage with and find commonalities with peers throughout their matriculation persisted to graduation. CCCSE (2014) indicated that Black male community college students felt that engagement mattered to their success in college. Gardenhire-Crooks et al., (2010) observed that Black males who have regular engagement with other peers are more likely to persist and reach their academic goals. Engagement with peers was displayed as a positive influence on Black males in this study. For example, Roy, a non-UMOCI participant indicated, "My peers contributed to me successfully graduating from PCC. I surrounded myself with successful friends. My friends inspired me to do better. They were very supportive and challenged me to be successful. I performed well in Math so I was able to help some of my peers. There were areas I didn't do so well in that my peers did and they would help me." Anthony, a UMOC participant stated the following about the positive influence of his peers on his persistence at Pinewood Community College:

> My peers at Pinewood Community College were instrumental to me graduating from Pinewood Community College. UMOCI and members of the Future Teachers Club helped me to successfully complete my degree. They encouraged me, provided support when I needed it, and assisted me when I needed help with my classes. They were like my frat brothers, an extended family. I was able to

communicate with my peers about all kind of things. We were able

to talk about current events, things going on in our neighborhood,

relationships, and problems. We had discussions about culture,

politics, and law enforcement actions.

Black males who participated in the UMOCI program reported that the

opportunity to engage and build relationships with peers had a positive effect on

their continued persistence and graduation from PCC. These participants indicated

that they were able to discuss personal issues with program peers who helped to

provide an outlet and a support mechanism to overcome barriers they faced while

matriculating at the college. Furthermore, UMOCI participants reported a sense of

"brotherhood" and a sense of "family" as a result of participating in the UMOCI.

They built relationships that made them more accountable for their own behaviors

and they helped to support their peers as well. The participants in the study, whether

enrolled in UMOCI or not, rarely reported issues related to attending an HSI.

Non-UMOCI participants who participated in cohort and support programs

such as the Help Move Forward program (HMF), reported that those programs, like

UMOCI, had a positive impact on their continued persistence and graduation. KJ,

for example, reported that the Help Move Forward support program was "amazing! I

was blessed to participate in HMF. -The Help Move Forward staff cared and

provided direction to students. The program provided me with a monthly bus card

and access to outside resources." Furthermore, Richie mentioned *The Get Done*

Now Program in his interview as a positive influence on his continued persistence at

the college. Richie stated "I liked my peers in Get Done Now. We [participants of

Get Done Now] went on trips together and we were provided with a lot of resources that helped us including book vouchers, bus cards, and dedicated advisors. The support programs mentioned by the study participants are established to support and assist small cohorts of similar students to successfully persist and graduate from PCC. Peer and student support programs and initiatives have provided pathways for Black male college students to attain academic success (Flowers 2006; Strayhorn 2011). This also supports the finding that Black males who experience positive and inclusive experiences throughout college will persist and graduate from HSIs. Hargrove (2014), found that Black males regarded support programs and contact with institutional agents as a "supportive nurturing milieu" contributing to their success at a Hispanic serving institution.

Gardenhire-Crooks et al., (2010) discussed negative experiences and interactions that Black males reported having with faculty and administrators because of stereotypes associated with their appearance. Andre, who is a 6 foot three-inch-tall Black male, felt that most professors were initially intimidated by him because of his height in addition to his being Black. He felt that students at the institution, who were not Black males and as tall or taller than he was, had a more positive experience at PCC. Although Andre indicated he had better experiences with teachers once they got to know him, he felt it was hard "breaking the ice" with faculty because of their perceptions of him and not having prior knowledge of him. Andre had to use various coping mechanisms to help faculty to understand that he was not a threat to them allowing them to form a relationship with him. Tinto (1975,

1993) argued that students make decisions to stay or leave college based on the interaction between the student and the institution's academic and social systems.

All participants indicated that they experienced some frustration due to the disorganization of institutional and operational procedures at Pinewood Community College. Participants specifically mentioned the procedures and operations of the financial aid and advisement offices. Thomas, for example explained "I did not like the financial aid process at Pinewood Community College. The process was archaic. The financial aid office was a place where I wasted a lot of time. I spent unnecessary time interacting with unpleasant staff members. The process was unorganized. The office couldn't provide me with answers and they couldn't find paperwork." Participants indicated that the frustrations began at the time of entry and continued throughout their matriculation at PCC.

The disorganization throughout the institution was continuously raised during interviews and had an impact on some of the participants' progress. When speaking of disorganization at Pinewood Community College, participants referred to a lack of standard procedures and procedures which were often confusing. Specifically, Anthony and Ron, indicated that the disorganization of the institution cost them extra tuition because they were advised to take unnecessary courses at Pinewood Community College. Anderson (1995), pointed out that students entering college "contend with a host of new forces that work against their persistence, while endeavoring to meet the demands of bureaucratic procedures, classes, reading assignments, examinations, library research, and laboratory experiments" (p. 50).

Historical theories and literature assert that Black males must have a positive and engaging induction experience upon entering post-secondary institutions (Anderson, 1995; Gibson, 2014; Tinto, 1993). All the participants indicated that opportunities to engage with peers with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds supported and enhanced their academic success and continued persistence at Pinewood Community College. Anthony mentioned that he sought out peers who shared commonalities the first day he arrived at Pinewood Community College. He attributed his success at the college to engaging with similar peers. Padilla's Local Model of Successful Minority Students indicated that one of the barriers faced by minority students entering post-secondary institutions included *lack of nurture (1997).* Padilla's LMSMS explains *lack of nurturing barriers* as "the absence of supportive resources on the campus needed to facilitate the adjustment and development of minority students" (Padilla et al., p. 131). In this study, Black males overcame the lack of the nurture barrier by connecting with peers in programs that shared commonalities and similarities with one another. Furthermore, the participants in this study found that *nurturing* from faculty members and program administrators who took an *interest* in them provided support that contributed to their success.

Padilla (1999) indicated that

> Students arrive at any campus with a wide range of background
> characteristics, interests, commitments, goals, etc. and join an
> equally diverse range of potential academic experiences that are
> determined by type of institution, choice of major, and the social

and academic cultures. There are only two possible outcomes for

each of the entering students. They either successfully complete

some program of study and attain a degree or they depart from the

institution prematurely without completing a degree program" (p.

134).

The decision for Black males in this study to continue to matriculate and

positively persist to graduation seemed to depend on their positive and

nurturing experience upon entry to Pinewood Community College.

Theme 2

Black males demonstrated positive regard for internal relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff

Black male students at Pinewood Community College perceived that forming positive relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff helped them to persist to graduation. Participants in both groups indicated that the personal relationships they formed with individuals at the campus helped them to persist. Tinto (1993) noted that the integration of students into college involves interactions with fellow students and faculty. The participants in this study indicated that the personal relationships that they formed with individuals at the college were similar to relationships they have with *family and close friends*. Roy, a non-UMOCI participant, for example stated:

> I liked my peers at Pinewood Community College. I feel like I met lifelong friends, especially with some of the students I tutored and members of the SGA. When I was on the SGA, there were so many events I had to attend with other SGA members that we formed our own family. We had to represent the student body and better the campus community. I liked that we were trying to do things for the better good of the entire student body. Sometimes it became controversial; however, we were all friends and worked together.

Mentorship for Black males at Pinewood community college included being guided through internal and external barriers, assisted with personal issues, and

being provided with academic assistance. Black male participants specifically spoke to the importance of connecting with and having mentors to successfully persist and graduate from Pinewood Community College. Anthony pointed out that the UMOCI director and staff were *mentors* that helped him to develop his own leadership skills. Andre indicated that the UMOCI program director displayed traits of mentorship that he has been able to utilize in the afterschool program where he works with at-risk kids. KJ, a non-UMOCI participant, mentioned a mentor who happened to be a program administrator that took money out of her pocket to insure students could afford to come to school. Jimmy, another non-UMOCI participant and current adjunct instructor at Pinewood Community College suggested that a Black male mentor program should be established at Pinewood Community College. He offered the idea that if more Black males at PCC had a mentor to encourage them, they might persist to graduation. The work of Beckles (2008) and Dickens (2012) has shown mentoring to have a positive effect on Black male persistence and graduation.

CCCSE (2014) shows that Black male community college students agree on four key points concerning what mattered most to their success in college: personal connections, high expectations, instructor quality, and engagement. The CCCSE (2014) study found that "students consistently refer to [the] power of having strong relationships – a formal or informal network on campus that include peers, instructors, advisors, and/or mentors" (p. 8). As suggested through the conceptual framework used to understand this phenomenon, the LMSM argues that successful minority students join or establish ethnic organizations, create a supportive "family"

on campus, attend ethnic events, seek out nurturing people regardless of ethnicity, use institutional resources (such as faculty, advisors, tutors), and develop their academic skills (Padilla et al., 1997).

Theme 3

Black males explained as positive their participation in student life activities and cohort support programs

Black male students in both groups at Pinewood Community College perceived that participating in student life activities and cohort support programs helped them to persist to graduation. Michael, a non-MOCI participant, mentioned "The VA club helped me. Being part of the VA club provided me with support dealing with my PTSD. I was among others who understood what I was going through. We were able to talk about our times in the service and supported each other while we attended college." Participation in student life activities and cohort programs allowed participants in this study to engage with similar peers and form "families" that nurtured their persistence at the college.

Palmer et al., (2014) indicated lacking *family* and relationship support has been identified as a barrier faced by minority college students. Padilla et al. (1997) argued that successful minority college students are those that create a supportive *family* on campus or involve their *biological family* in the collegiate experience. Black male participants in this study overcome the lack of nurture barrier by participating in student life activities and cohort support programs. Anthony, for example stated "I liked being a member of the UMOCI program. I found the program to be helpful and it provided me with both mentorship and leadership development."

KJ shared "My Help Move Forward peers were my family. We shared our resources and we helped each other with classes. We went on trips together. I really got to know people in the program." According to CCCSE (2014) "Many campuses have tried to serve men of color more effectively by introducing highly personal, engaging—but very small—boutique programs. While these programs may have positive effects on participating students, they typically serve far too few students, and they are neither readily nor often brought to scale" (p.5). However, the very small "boutique" programs at PCC served the minority males in this study very effectively as evidenced by their persistence to graduation.

Tinto (1993) pointed out "congruence and contact need not imply a perfect or even extensive match between the individual and the institution as a whole. Nor does it require wide-ranging contact with other members of the institution. But it does argue that the person must find some compatible academic and/or social group with whom to establish membership and make those contacts" (p. 59). Tinto (1993) further argued that "the persistence of students of color often hinges upon there being a sufficiently large number of similar types of students on campus with whom to form a viable community" (p. 58). In this study, participants in both groups were able to develop relationships with each other and with college administrators in order to learn about other resources available on the campus.

Although student life activities and cohort support programs were shown to support the persistence of participants in this study, participants continuously spoke of the lack of a sufficient number of student life and cohort program offerings. Anthony, for example, pointed out his disappointment in the small number of student

life activities that were offered at Pinewood Community College. He indicated that

PCC lacked student life activities in comparison to the four-year university in which

he transferred. Education Corner (2016) pointed out "Most community colleges don't

invest as much in campus facilities, athletic programs, and student

clubs/organizations. That makes it more affordable, but many students feel the need

to have *the college experience*, which includes living in student dorms and

participating in campus life" (para. 20).

Theme 4

Black males acknowledged that "lacking organizational structure" could have

discouraged their progress toward graduation

Tinto (1994) indicated "The strength of the organization view of student

departure lies in its reminding us that the organization of educational institutions,

their formal structures, resources, and patterns of associations, does impact on

student retention" (p.89). Black male participants in both groups faced and had to

overcome institutional barriers that discouraged their persistence at Pinewood

Community College. Participants in both groups spoke about the disorganization of

the institution and the required internal assistance to overcome this barrier. The

participants spoke about the lack of organization of student service departments

including admissions and financial aid. Furthermore, most of the participants were

required to seek assistance from internal constituents including faculty, staff, and

peers in order to successfully persist to graduation and contrary to popular opinion

building relationships with faculty and staff in particular is not common among

minority students (Strayhorn, 2011). Anderson (1985) asserted that college students

entering higher education institutions must overcome "steep obstacles and perform at the highest levels demanded by colleges and universities" (p. 46). Anderson further stated "these obstacles include: completing institutional procedures – applying for admission, registering, enrolling in classes, filing petitions, obtaining financial aid, procuring housing, and so on" (p.46).

One concept of Padilla's Local Model of Successful Minority Students indicates that minority students face "difficulties associated with the financial aid system" (p. 131). This concept was a barrier faced by most of the participants in this study. For example, Jimmy a non-UMOCI participant stated:

> The disorganization of the college causes students to get the run around. There is no cohesion in the organization of Pinewood Community College. I really felt like the Financial Aid and the Bursars offices were the worst. PCC has more than eleven thousand students and they only have three people helping students at the financial aid counter. Often times the staff were unavailable and never reachable by phone. The financial aid department is mostly staffed by college assistants and they did not have access to confidential information.

The occurrence of student departure is reflective of the institution's ability to engage and satisfy students. Tinto (1994) suggests that organizational theories that explain worker production and turnover, are similar and also explain student departure. Tinto further stated, "Departure is as much, if not more, a reflection of institutional behavior as it is of the individuals within an institution" (p. 89).

Review of Themes

Many of the themes discovered in this study were overwhelmingly similar to participants in both UMOCI and non-UMOCI groups. There were few differences in the overall experiences of Black males who participated in the UMOCI program compared to the non-UMOCI participants. Overall, students in both groups reported a positive perception of matriculation at Pinewood Community College. The theme related to a positive regard for internal relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff was expressed by all participants in the study. The participants formed relationships with mentors, peers, faculty, and program staff as descriptive of the success of Black male students at the institution. All UMOCI participants discussed their representation in at least one student life activity, club, or student government organization at the institution; and this activity was an example of positive engagement in the institutional and formal aspects of PCC. Some non-UMOCI participants who did not participate in student life activities, mostly due to obligations outside of school, did not mention student life activities as a positive support to their continued persistence to graduation. Study participants, regardless of the group, reported dissatisfaction with the organization of Pinewood Community College's student services and operations. The lack of organization in areas such as financial aid, admissions, and advisement, at PCC was mentioned by nearly all of the participants as specific areas that impeded their persistence to graduation.

Black males who successfully graduated from Pinewood Community College had similar experiences regardless of whether they participated in UMOCI.

Conceptual Implications

The conceptual framework that guided this study was Padilla's (1997) Local Model of Successful Minority Students. This conceptual framework was used to identify knowledge and actions necessary to overcome barriers that prevent Black male persistence and prohibit them from graduating from Hispanic-serving community colleges. The LMSMS barriers include: discontinuity, lack of nurturing, lack of presence, and lack of resources (figure 1).

Figure 1: Padilla's Local Model-LMSMS
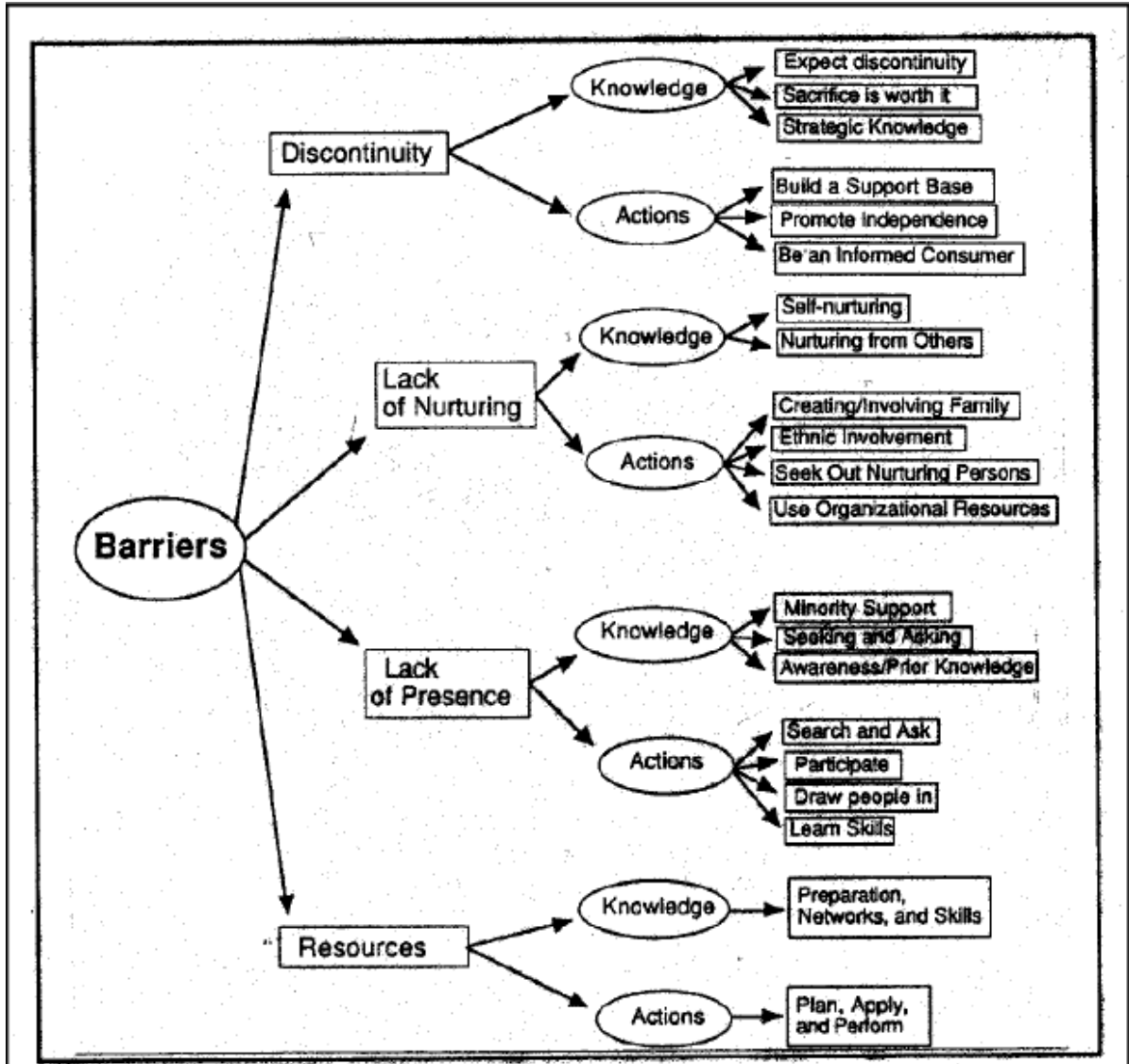
Padilla, R.V. (1999). College student retention: Focus on success. *Journal of College Student Retention* 1(2), 141.

The researcher began the analysis by examining confluence and inconsistencies of

discontinuity.

Padilla's model exhibits three aspects of knowledge (what students need in

order to successfully navigate the institution leading to graduation); these are:

students expect discontinuity, they believe the sacrifice is 'worth it,' and strategic

knowledge (skills and affects to promote successful navigation through the system)

are known and accepted by students. In conversations with UMOCI students the researcher agreed that the most fundamental reference to discontinuity was their acceptance of issues moving from high school to college and their beliefs that their efforts were indeed worth the sacrifices they made. When reflecting on their strategic knowledge, both sets of participants envisioned institutional barriers as hurdles they could 'jump over' in their race to conform to institutional requirements. Their actions told a slightly different story; the researcher learned that they had to personally and informally build a support base (whether family, peers, or program selection) to help them succeed. The researcher acknowledges that this support base provided them with independence, and the ability to push forward on their own recognizance. The question of whether they became an "informed consumer" was only understood as part of their determination to succeed and graduate—the researcher did not hear evidence to the contrary. Discontinuity, therefore, became an area of consistency.

Next the barrier of nurturing was consulted as an area of confluence or inconsistency. Nurturing is a difficult concept to interpret as indicated by the research of Wood and Nevarez (2010) who refer to the idea as a *sense of belonging*. The researcher could not go beyond the idea of "self-nurturance" or partial nurturance from others in either group, inasmuch as their activities or actions pointed to their dissatisfactions with what might be called an ethnic divide between Blacks and Hispanics. Organizational resources seemed to be lacking as an action they personally could account for. The researcher discovered consistencies in this

barrier between the two participant groups in this study and Padilla's model and its resources (knowledge and actions).

The barrier of lack of *presence* played out well between the participants' discussions and the themes derived from them and the Padilla model. In terms of knowledge, minority support from the UMOCI students was evident in their acknowledgment that institutional personnel in this program were helpful. This was less so for the non-UMOCI participants. As far as actions were concerned, the reflective question that asked to what extent the participants could act on their own to discover presence in the form of either institutional or personal support, the outcome was a mixed bag. Sometimes both the institution and they themselves could rise to ask the right questions and to raise issues that caused barriers; at other times they were stymied in their actions. Some inconsistencies between the findings in this study and Padilla's model were noted for *presence*.

The final barrier, *resources*, both from the participants' explanations and discussions were the most exhaustive barriers. This specific barrier no doubt stemmed from the idea that community college resources are generally insufficient to make a difference for students' unique identities in that milieu. The researcher did not see confluence between Padilla's model and participants' discussions. The researcher, however, believes that if there were an examination of "graduates'" quality of life after graduation, they might be able to "plan, apply, and perform" personal qualities to help their fellow students also succeed.

Recommendations for Practice

Understanding experiences of Black males who successfully persist to graduation at Hispanic-serving community colleges is deemed essential for community college administrators who want to increase the persistence and graduation rates of Black males. Several practical implications of this study were provided and focused on the experiences of Black males who successfully completed an Associate's degree at a Hispanic-serving institution.

The researcher reiterates that more Black men are enrolled in Hispanic-serving Institutions than at Historical Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately Black Institutions combined (IPEDS, 2016). The Black men in this study were able to successfully acclimate into Pinewood Community College and persist to graduation. Although the researcher is no longer employed at PCC, these findings will be shared with appropriate staff and administrators with whom the researcher maintains a professional relationship.

This study provided evidence that both the minority male initiative as well as other small cohort support programs that grouped students by commonalities, provided support to Black male persistence at Pinewood Community College. As most of the support programs at the institution are voluntary, the institution should consider making participation in a support program mandatory for incoming Black male students. Black males in both groups described the support and assistance they received from peers, staff, and faculty by participating in support programs as positive. This study demonstrated Black males referred to aspects of and

participation in small cohort programs as a positive mechanism that supported their ability to persist and graduate.

Scholars have pointed out that peer and student support programs and initiatives have provided pathways for Black male college students to attain academic success (Flowers 2006; Strayhorn 2011; Wood 2011). Black males in this study pointed out that they would like to have more on-board training that included an introduction to support services offered at the college as well as academic skills building. The institution should consider establishing a pre-entry program designed for new-entering Black males. The pre-entry program could be arranged by majors/academic departments, personal and social interest, and staffed by Black male and female faculty and staff members. As the institution has an internal support organization specifically for Black staff and faculty, this could be an initiative that they oversee as part of their service to the institution. Creating such a program might make Black males feel more welcomed and connect them with similar peers and employees of the college. This is a practice that is suggested for Black males; however, could be expanded to serve other students at the institution.

Based on the theme that the institution's lack of organization caused Black male students strife in overcoming barriers, the institution is encouraged to establish better communication with Black males and create accessible information that provides internal contacts and steps to overcome such barriers. This information should be disseminated to Black males upon acceptance/entry to the college and at new student orientations. This information, accessible in print or online, should be

also be made available for all students because students other than Black males may face similar barriers at Pinewood Community College.

Ashford (2014) indicated colleges could use new and emerging technology to promote and assist student persistence. As suggested by Anthony, a UMOCI participant, the institution should include an interactive component to its website, reflective of an *on-line* generalist/advisor that can field and respond to questions submitted by students. In addition to the on-line advisor, the institution should implement an application that can be accessible for students through multiple devises including cell phones and tablets. The interactive application can provide Black males with immediate information about locations of services and possibly be enhanced to perform functions such as making appointments in academic and support service departments. Today's community college students utilize technology as part of daily routines and living; they expect their educational institution to be in-tune to new and changing technology. This implication may not only improve persistence and gradation of Black males; it could be beneficial for all students attending Pinewood Community College.

Because Pinewood Community College is an urban community college and serves many Black males who face socio-economic and sociological barriers, the institution should consider creating an in-take form to gather information about the barriers that students face. Analysis of the data from the in-take form could ultimately result in services that are available through the institution that could support Black male students while matriculating. Although this practice is being provided as a recommendation to increase Black male persistence and graduation

rates, this practice could be utilized to assist the general population of students at the institution.

Nine of the ten Black male participants in this study spoke negatively about the daunting task they faced in understanding, navigating, and receiving assistance from staff in the financial aid department at Pinewood Community College. In order to overcome barriers faced by successful minority students, Padilla et al. (1997) suggested that they had to "prepare early for the financial aid process, network with people who understood the financial aid system, and develop their time management skills" (p.131). Given the issues surrounding financial aid, Pinewood Community College might consider reviewing and improving current financial aid processes to provide extra time and assistance for Black males. Recommendations include finding ways to automate necessary processes and tasks that students must complete in person. Additionally, the institution should institute new processes that allow Black males to begin the financial aid process earlier and at off-peak times, allowing for more personalized attention. An option for this practice is to have financial aid staff members attend and be available at new student orientations designed primarily for Black male incoming students. This practice implication is one that could not only benefit the success of Black males at the institution; it could result in the success of other populations of students as well.

Finally, this study suggests that Black males found participating in student-life activities a positive experience during their matriculation at Pinewood Community College; however, many of the participants indicated dissatisfaction with the number and diversity of student life activities offered. As part of the implications for practice,

it is suggested that the institution develop new and expanded student life activities. Roy, a non-UMOCI participant suggested more gym/athletic activities and open hours. In addition, the institution should consider creating a student life activity such as a peer-to-peer mentoring program for Black males; the last three consecutive student government association presidents were active members of the UMOCI program. Therefore, building a formal leadership development program to enhance leadership skills of promising Black males may encourage more Black males to persist to graduation.

Recommendation for Future Research

This research study focused on the experiences of Black males who successfully graduated from a Hispanic-serving community college and did not explore the experiences of Black males who did not reach the same success. It is recommended that future research should enlarge the sample to include experiences of successful Black males who graduated from an HSCC compared to the experiences of Black males who were not successful and dropped out or stopped out and did not persist and graduate.

Personal Reflections

As an African American male who persisted and graduated from an urban community college, my experiences as a community college graduate nearly twenty years prior to the participants in this study were similar in some ways yet different in others. I completed my high school education at Morgan Park High School in Chicago, Illinois with an overall grade point average of 2.3. I somehow earned a 21 ACT score and that score helped earn me acceptance to all of the colleges to which

I applied. My first choice was to attend Hampton University (Hampton), my second choice was Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (Florida A&M), and my last safe choice was Illinois State University (ISU). Hampton and Florida A&M are HBCUs and ISU is a Predominantly White Institution. I accepted admissions to Hampton; however, two days before I was scheduled to leave for college, I received a tuition bill indicating seven thousand dollars was immediately due and all financial aid had been applied to my account. Because of my inability to pay the tuition bill at Hampton, my first introduction to college was at Illinois State University. At ISU, I never felt connected to my peers and I would return home nearly every weekend. At the end of my first semester in college, I had a cumulative grade point average of 1.3. However, much like many Black males entering college, I had goals of earning a college degree.

I did not know how I would complete the task of earning a college degree; however, like most Black males who decide to pursue post-secondary education, I enrolled at a local community college. At Harold Washington College, a community college, I became engaged with peers, improved my academic skills, and began to believe that I could earn a college degree. I completed my Associate's degree at Harold Washington College and transferred to Chicago State University (CSU), a Predominately Black Institution. At CSU, I found a connection to the institution, my peers, faculty and staff. My peers looked like me and shared commonalities and experiences. Through the support offered and my persistence at CSU, I attained my Bachelor's degree.

At the conclusion of my undergraduate study at CSU, I had a new appreciation for education and applied to a Master's program. To my surprise, I was conditionally admitted to a Master's program at Chicago State University. As part of the Master's program academic requirements, I had to complete an internship. My internship as a teacher assistant at Kennedy-King College afforded me the opportunity to work with a tenured professor and appreciate community colleges. The life-changing experience was my introduction to a career in post-secondary education.

Two ideologies have directed my development. First, I believe "*it takes a connected community college to graduate a student*," from the first staff member who a student meets upon entrance, to the janitor who maintains the campus, to the President who has responsibility for the entire college. Each of their roles is equally important in the success of community college students. Second and simply stated, "*I am not my Brother's keeper, I am my Brother.*" I was once just like many of the students I now mentor and educate. A Black male community college student, who faced barriers, and could have stopped or dropped-out, yet persisted to graduation. If a Black male is uneducated, I am uneducated.

Appendix 1

IRB Approval from Pinewood Community College

From: ███████████
Sent: Tuesday, September 13, 2016 11:54 AM
To: Jonelle Knox
Subject: Project is approved

Hi Jonelle,

Dean ██ has approved your project and you are free to begin your research. Let me know if you need any kind of official documentation stating such.

Best,

Alex

████████████

██████████████████

Human Subjects Research Protection Program (HRPP) Coordinator

████ Community College/██████

Appendix 2

IRB Approval from Morgan State University

MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY.

GROWING THE FUTURE ● LEADING THE WORLD

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

September 2, 2016

Dr. Henry Link/Dr. Rosemary Gillett-Karam
School of Education and Urban Studies
Morgan State University

RE: IRB #16/08-0076

Dear Dr. Link/Dr. Gillett-Karam:

Following review of the revised materials submitted to the IRB with respect to the study being conducted by your student, Jonelle Knox, titled "Experiences Of Black Males at A Hispanic-Serving Community College", I am pleased to inform you that **IRB Approval** is hereby granted for the project.

Please note that the current **approval** is for a one-year period from the date of this letter. Also note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to inform the IRB promptly should there be a material change in the study methodology.

Do not hesitate to contact me at X3190, or Dr. Isuk at X3447 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Annette Palmer, Ph.D.
IRB Chairperson

IRB APPROVED
SIGNATURE
DATE 09/06/2016
VOID ONE YEAR FROM DATE ABOVE

Cc

Dr. Edet Isuk, IRB Administrator

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