

An Exploration of Culture as an Agent of African American Male Persistence from
a Community College

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Millersville University of Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Social Work

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April 24, 2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Exploration of Culture as an Agent of African American Male Persistence from

a Community College

By

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Millersville University, 2018

Millersville, Pennsylvania

Directed by Karen Rice, PhD

The problem of lack of persistence to graduation of more African American males from the community college is complex. The complexities can be found in the micro, mezzo, and macro lived experiences of African American males at the community college. This phenomenological study sought to understand the role of culture as an agent in African American male persistence at a Community College. Two research questions were examined: (1) what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence? (2) What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence? The findings revealed internal and external factors that led to African American male persistence at the community where this study was conducted. The findings also uncovered internal and external barriers that hinder African American male persistence at a Community College. The findings provided an in depth discussion, which led to implications and conclusion for social work leadership, practice and research in higher education.

Karen E. Polite
Signature of Investigator

Date: 4/24/18

Dedication

To my “Poppy,” and His amazing team, you have grown and stretched me exceedingly abundantly more than I could ask hope or image. Thank you Poppy for keeping your Word, and providing everything I needed on this doctoral journey. To my dad, Henry Hinton, who had a 6th grade education yet instilled in me the value of education and hard work. To my mom, Rosa Mae Hinton, who introduced me to God, and paved the way for me to discover God for myself. To my Ancestors, thank you for continuing to carry, guide and direct me on this journey, if there were no you, there would be no me. To my beloved husband, Nelson Polite Jr., thank you for being my rock, my anchor and a quiet strength, who continues to “hold it down,” through it all.

Acknowledgements

It is said that no one completes a doctorate degree alone, it is family, community, and friends who persist with a person on the journey. Therefore, I would like acknowledge some of those who persisted with me on this doctoral journey:

First of all, “Poppy,” thank you! I cannot say thank you enough, without you this dissertation would not have been possible. To my family who supported me through this journey- to my wonderful husband of 19 years, I love you, and thank God for you. You took on the tasks of cooking, running errands, folding and putting away cloths, catching things I forgot. You have been a quiet force “holding it down,” as I stayed up late, got up at odd hours, and slept late after being up late. Also you understood the times I had a shortage of words, as this research consumed much of my thoughts and words, thank you. To my siblings, nieces and nephews thank you for taking care of mom, when I simply could not, each of you stepped up to the plate and hit homeruns when needed. To our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, thank you understanding that mom/nanny K had to put all social engagements on hold over the last three years. To my mom, although you didn’t quite understand why I had to spend so much time doing school work, or what the doctorate degree was all about, you supported me 100%. To my dad, although you were called home during my second year of doctoral studies, I sensed your presence during those late nights, early mornings, and long hours in the library. I know you are present with the rest of the ancestors cheering me on from the other side. I know you have always been proud of my educational accomplishments, and I am certain that you are proud of me for earning a doctorate degree. To my “support family,” thank you for being present,

and “keeping me straight,” on my healing journey, I could not have done it without each of you.

To my sister, Bertha Saldana DeJesus, I thank God for you! I could not image being on this doctoral journey without you. Since the beginning when we decided we would apply for the DSW at MU we have been inseparable, with God right in the midst! Through our Glides, Google Hangout sessions, What’s App, text messages, tears, victories and defeats, we kept pressing! Thank you for being the powerful woman of God you are. I know God placed us on the DSW pathway together for reasons we have only begun to know, and I trust we will continue our sisterhood after we complete this leg of our “assignment.”

To my colleagues- thank you, you cheered me on, providing advice, and encouraging me. To my colleagues who have earned PhD’s, thank you for providing wise counsel on how to complete the sometimes overwhelming tasks of doctoral work.

To my committee- Chair, Dr. Karen Rice, committee members Dr. Leonora Foels, and Dr. Kimberly Mahaffy, my research and final dissertation would not have been as rigorous if not for each of you. Dr. Karen Rice, brought wealth of knowledge about doctoral scholarship that fed and encouraged me, and allowed me to soar. Dr. Foels, brought a quiet strength as a women of color, and your knowledge and expertise about African American students within in the Academy. Dr. Kimberly Mahaffy, introduced and oriented me to Nvivo. Dr. Mahaffy, you also provided a solid foundation in qualitative research that equipped me with courage to complete the sometimes overwhelming work of this research methodology.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible if not for the thirteen men who shared their stories with me. I am grateful that they generously gave their time, and so openly conveyed their experience with culture and persistence as African American men. Their voices and stories are powerful, telling, and humbling, and what they have accomplished in their persistence as men of color is amazing. I am confident that what I learned from them will be used to help more African American students persist to degree completion.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

According to the United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2016, an estimated 7.2 million students attended two year institutions. During the 2016-2017 academic year, institutions of higher education awarded 1.08 million associates' degrees (NCES, 2016). Of specific interest is that the percentage of Blacks attending the community college increased from 11.7% to 14.5% between the years 2000 to 2014 (NCES, 2016). Moreover, a large number of Black male students make their transition into institutions of higher education via the community college. Nationally African American males make up an estimated average of 35% of minority students enrolled at the community college ("Aspirations to Achievement," 2014; NCES, 2016). As a conclusion of the data, eighty-seven percent of Black males who enrolled in the community college held aspirations to earn an associate's degree ("Aspirations to Achievement," 2014). All of the above outlined data substantiates that African American males represent a large percentage of students enrolled in the academy, however enrollment of these students does not equate to persistence or degree completion.

In looking more closely at persistence, NCES (2016) identifies persistence at the community college as a student who completes an associate's degree in two years or four semesters not including summers. Moreover, student loan providers, along with recent legislation about limits to financial aid, have established a formula that allows a student to extend aid not to exceed six semesters, which includes periods of "stop out" or drop out (NCES, 2016). However, after six semesters or three years, not including summers, a student may not be eligible for financial aid. Consequently, the challenge for African

American males to persist in light of financial aid mandates and student loan concerns are amplified.

In further exploration of the data on persistence, NCES (2016) found that 15.3% of Black males persisted at a community college without earning a degree. Although minority males at the community college are the fastest growing population enrolling at the community college, they have the lowest levels of educational attainment. Stated differently, 40.1% of Black males dropped out or were not enrolled after three years at the community college (NCES, 2016). Yet another report posits that 67% of African American males begin at the community college, but never earn a degree (Gibson, 2014). Another alarming statistic reports that the retention rate among African American males at the community college is less than 10% and that African American males have the lowest persistence rates of all ethnic groups, nationally (Hagedorn, Maxwell & Hampton, 2001).

It is evident in the literature that the community college is the pathway by which many African American men enter higher education, and a large percentage hold aspirations to earn an Associate degree (Flowers, 2006; Harris & Wood, 2003; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood, 2012; Wood & Palmer, 2014). However, a large number of African American men never realize their goal of earning a college degree. This phenomenon has signaled the alarm for institutions of higher education to consider innovative ways to increase rates of persistence and ultimately increase rates of graduation of African American males from the community college. The literature is replete with data about the challenge of African American male persistence to graduation from the community college ("Aspirations to Achievement," 2014; Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2004,2006; Glenn 2003; Hagedorn, Maxwell & Hampton, 2001; Harper & Wood, 2016; Harris & Wood, 2003; Strayhorn,

2012; NCES, 2016; Wood; 2012,2013; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood & Palmer, 2014).

However, the literature fails to explore the role of culture in African American male persistence. Therefore, it is imperative that further research be employed to explore how/if African American culture and other social dynamics impact the persistence of African American males enrolled at the community college.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of lack of persistence to graduation of more African American males from the community college is complex. The complexities can be found in the micro, mezzo, and macro lived experiences of African American males at the community college.

Challenges at the micro level include the psychological impact and distress of identity in the context of culture, ethnicity, and race. According to Phinney and Alipuria (1990) ethnic minority students are challenged with completing the developmental stage of identity formation while dually completing the ethnic/cultural identity process. This experience occurs while the student is coping with the daily challenge of a negative campus climate, including microaggressions and other psychosocial stressors (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). More specifically, the experience, stress, and psychological pressure of being an African American male impacts his perception of himself. These perceptions clearly impact self-esteem, self-identity, and self-efficacy (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Phinney, 1990). Therefore, not only are self-esteem, self –identity and self-efficacy impacted during identity development, consequently, the identity formation process also influences and impacts how African American males persist to graduation.

Additional micro factors that impact persistence include the lived cultural experience and the challenge of dual identity, double consciousness, and poly culturalism

(Branson, Markus & Taylor, 2015; Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016). In short, dual identity, double consciousness and poly culturalism is when African American's live two cultures, mainstream American and African American. Furthermore, this lived cultural experience is attached to an African /African American past, which is linked to present day living, and influences the future of an African American males' persistence at the community college (Branson, Markus & Taylor, 2015). In addition to lived cultural experience, African American males must also contend with the identity strain of double consciousness whereby the identity of a person of African descent is divided into several parts which makes it next to impossible to have one unified identity (DuBois, 1903). More specifically, while on campus African American males are expected to act White or align/ identify with White culture (Ogbu, 2004). However, when they return to their mezzo environment, the students must maintain ethnic/cultural identity. At times, the two identities converge creating a strain as African American males attempt to negotiate another layer of identity. Consequently, the phenomena of double consciousness and acting White Influence African American male persistence at the community college.

The mezzo environmental factors that impact African American male persistence include the academic and campus environment, as well as the management and maintenance of relationships with peers, family, friends, and the community (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Nhoedibe, 2006; Phinney, 1990; Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). More specifically, when African American males arrive on campus, their first encounters are with a White academic culture (Ogbu, 1992). Moreover, this culture of predominately non-African American faculty, staff and peers tends to be plagued with interactions that view African American males from a deficit perspective, and/or through the lens of the black male

stereotype of thug, thief, or a person to be feared, suspicious of, and/or subdued (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). While African American males are constantly battling these environmental onslaughts as they are facing the challenges of completing their college education, persistence becomes even more difficult. Yet another more specific example of a mezzo environmental indicator that impact persistence can be found in the role strain of balancing educational commitment, as well as family roles and responsibilities. This role strain deeply influences an African American male's persistence decision because family is highly valued in African American culture (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Guiffrida, 2006). For example, role strain can be seen in an African American male who works full-time (or part-time), with financial responsibility for his child (ren) (via child support), while maintaining academic work, relationship(s) with child(ren), and sometimes maintaining relationship(s) with the mother of his child(ren). These multiple roles and expectations can create strain that influences an African American male's decision to persist. The last example of how the mezzo environment impacts persistence is evident in relationship strain between friends and community, friends and community who may not know or understand the process, stressors, and/or constraints of completing a college degree. Additionally, these mezzo environmental relationships between the student, friends, and community may hold unspoken expectations of old relationship patterns of engagement, even as the student struggles with identity resolution and role strain (Guiffrida, 2006).

In addition to the micro and mezzo indicators that influence persistence, there are also macro factors that impact persistence, including the macro burden of collective African American identity. More specifically, Social Identity Theory (SIT), advances that

collective identity-group cultural identity is tied to individual behavior. More succinctly, whatever an African American male does or does not do has ramifications for the collective identity of the African American community (Gomez, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The burden of responsibility for the collective identity of all African Americans, compounded by being under the microscope of oppression, racism, and discrimination, holds implications for African American male persistence.

In summary, African American males experience extraordinary micro, mezzo, and macro environmental barriers. These hurdles stand in the way of an African American males' persistence at the community college. Therefore, it is imperative that further research explore the intersectionality between culture, persistence, and African American male's graduation from the community college. Additionally, ongoing research is necessary because it will contribute to the professional body of knowledge and aid in policy and program development within the academy to increase the rates of persistence of African American males. Ultimately, persistence to graduation of this group of dynamic men will provide cultural capital/community cultural wealth to local communities, as well as to the larger society.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks applied to better understand the role of culture in the persistence of African American males at the community college are Critical Race Theory (CRT) as applied to education (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), Cultural Capital Theory (CCT), as related to Community Cultural Wealth (Bourdieu, 2011 and Yosso, 2005), Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), and the Cultural Integrity Model (CIM) (Tierney, 1999).

These theoretical constructs were selected because they best address the variables of culture and persistence as related to African American males at the community college.

Initially, Tinto's (1975) theory of Student Departure (see figure 1), was selected as the primary theory. Although Tinto's (1975) theory is the most referenced body of work in the extant literature on the topic of student retention, the efficacy of the model has been criticized due to its limited applicability to minority students (Anumba, 2015; Braxton, Milem & Sullivan, 2000; Berry & Candis, 2013; Guiffrida, 2006; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Museus & Quay, 2009). Consequently, CRT, CCT, SIT and CIM are a better fit for this research phenomenon.

Critical Race theory (CRT) was developed by a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Berry & Candis, 2013). CRT emerged from the fact that the tokenism of civil rights legislation did not attack the foundations of racism in the United States. The four main points of CRT are:

1. *Counter storytelling*, which aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises and myths. Counter storytelling can be told in various forms, including personal stories/narratives, other people's stories/narratives, and composite stories/narratives. These stories and narratives give voice to marginalized groups, and in the process counter storytelling helps others better understand the lived experience of African American males specifically. For example, blackness as a comparative to Whiteness or White privilege, to tell the story of the lived experience of African American males with discrimination, prejudice and racism.
2. *The permanence of racism* posits that racism is a part of American culture, as old as the Constitution itself that considered enslaved Africans/African Americans as three fifth of a human being. This permanence of racism controls the political, social, economic, and even the cultural narratives in Western Society.
3. *Interest convergence/liberalism* looks at how civil rights and other policy efforts were only formalized because said policies were seen to benefit Whites intentionally, and Blacks secondarily. For example, civil rights legislation was

said to have benefited White women first (e.g., equality to men) and then Blacks secondly.

4. "*Whiteness*" as *property* considers how being White is like owning property; it grants privilege to the owner that a renter (a Black person) would not be afforded. (Berry & Candis, 2013). In essence, while Whiteness is equivalent to White privilege, and blackness is equivalent to the antonyms of privilege, or disadvantage, detriment or restriction. In addition, blackness translates to discrimination, prejudice and racism.

CRT was later applied to education by Ladson- Billings (2010) and Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995). CRT seeks to expose and address the inequalities that plague the current social and economic spheres of education. In addition, CRT asserts that the education system, just as the legal system, is contaminated by racial tones and inconsistencies. These perspectives have become critical when the toxins are presented as unbiased and impartial. For example, in the academy a college or university has a strategic plan and college wide policies that assert the support of valuing diversity and inclusion, while faculty, staff, and students' biases are expressed unchecked as microaggressions against African American students in general and African American males specifically. CRT is designed to confront the ways that disadvantaged people suffer from the legacy of historical and present day racism and racist practices. Moreover, CRT as applied to education is used to expose and dismantle the deficit view that African American males are inferior. In addition, CRT is designed to increase equality in institutional policies and practices with African American males enrolled in the Academy. Finally, CRT will be applied to African American males and persistence when considering the macro implications of race, racism, discrimination, and prejudice.

The second theory that will be used to explore the research phenomenon of the role of culture and African American male persistence is Cultural Capital Theory (CCT). In this

theory, Bourdieu (1977) considers how middle and upper- class persons inherit cultural capital through their families and neighborhoods. The three types of cultural capital are as follows:

1. Embodied Capital, or “high culture,” asserts that persons are patrons of the arts, visit museums, etc.
2. Objectified Capital is the ability not just to own cultural goods but also to use and enjoy that which one owns. An example of objectified capital is owning and cherishing a prized painting.
3. Institutionalized State Capital is the license that institutions or governing bodies (college or university, church, etc.) hold to confer on individuals who have achieved a socially sanctioned goal or status, e.g., a college degree, which signals that a person can assume a particular position in society. The problem is when African American males do not persist to graduate from the community college, they do not obtain this important piece of Institutionalized State Capital. This piece of capital will allow African American males to participate more fully in the cultural capital process (p. 71).

Although Bourdieu’s (2011) Critical Cultural Theory is based on middle and upper class European values and beliefs, Yosso (2005) and Tierney (1999) challenge and transform the racism inherent in CCT through the development of the Community Cultural Wealth Model (CCW). This model asserts that African American communities (and other communities of color) have rich cultural capital that includes aspirational, family, social, navigational, resistant, and linguistic capital. For example, family and social capital can be seen when a family member (includes extended and fictive family), provides money for a bus pass or provides a ride to and from campus when the student experiences transportation challenges. Another example of cultural capital can be seen in aspirational capital, and the fact that eighty-seven percent of Black males who enrolled in the community college held aspirations to earn an associate’s degree (“Aspirations to Achievement,” 2014). In essence, aspirational capital asserts the hopes and dreams of African American males to persist and earn a college degree despite inequities in education. In conclusion, Yosso (2005) puts

forward the need for colleges and universities to apply the CCW model to persistence of students of color in general, and African American males at the community college in specific.

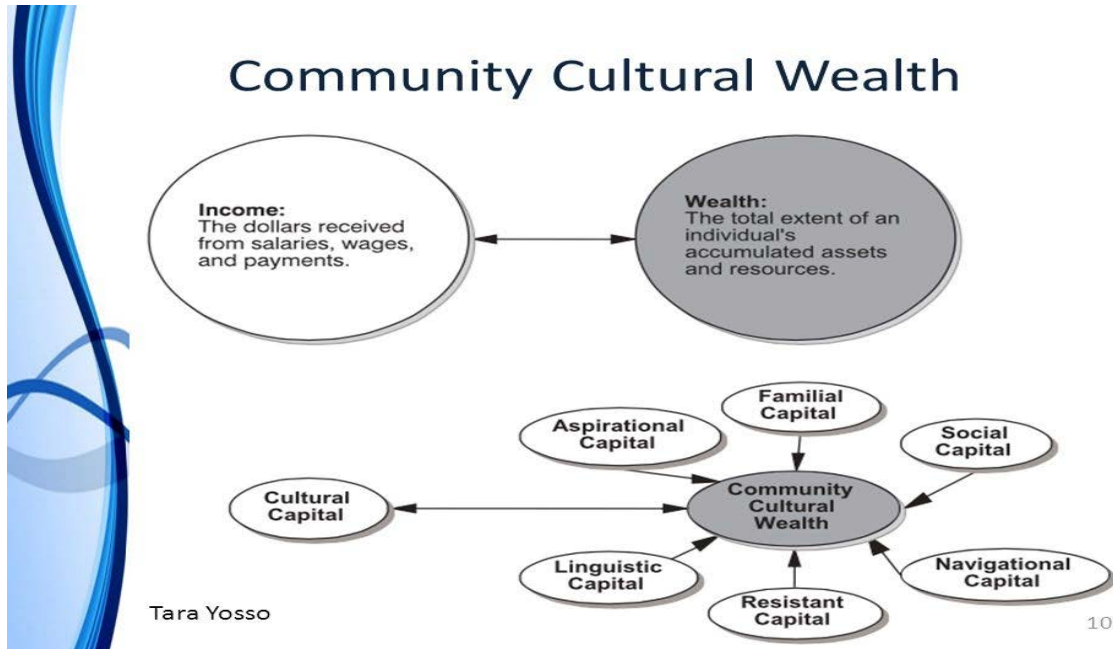


Figure 1. *Community Cultural Wealth* adapted from Yosso, T. Whose Culture has capital? *Race, Ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-71

The third theory that aims to understand culture, and African American males' persistence at the community college is the Social Identity Theory (SIT). This theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). SIT has its roots in psychology and posits that group membership is an important source of pride and self-esteem for group members. There are three stages that occur for the development of group social identity to be completed. The three stages are as follows:

1. *Categorization* is when group members divide or categorize themselves and other groups as "us and them" or "in and out" groups. For example, Blacks or African Americans, Whites, Muslims, and Christians are categorized groups.
2. *Social Identification* occurs once group members are categorized and they conform to the norms of the group. There is emotional significance in identification with one's group. For example, once African Americans identify

- with their group, there are norms about race, discrimination, prejudice, racism, and White privilege that are superimposed on African Americans. These norms are a direct result of being a member of an out group. Consequently, being an African American and having these larger societal norms superimposed is emotionally charged with remnants of a past history dating back to African enslavement.
3. *Social Comparison* occurs when one group (either an in or out group) compares itself with other groups, and it is in this state that prejudice and discrimination are practiced as one group competes to maintain its self-esteem. For example, when African Americans are compared to Whites with regard to housing or crime, it is many times projected that African Americans are negligent and less than Whites with regard to crime and housing.

Social Identity theory applies to African American males at the community college, as they are socially categorized, identified, and compared in ways that impact their micro, mezzo, and macro environments in an oppressive way. By the same token this suggests that these ways of oppression ultimately impact persistence of African American males as a social group.

The final theory (perspective/model) that relates to persistence of African American men and graduation from the community college is the Cultural Integrity (CI) model. When this perspective is used in the context of education it posits that school-based programs and teaching strategies that engage a student's racial/ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner toward the development of more relevant pedagogies and learning activities are practicing Cultural Integrity (Tierney, 1999, p. 93). In essence, the Cultural Integrity model does not expect students to reject their ethnic culture (and cultural capital/community cultural wealth or to integrate and assimilate into the dominant culture. Cultural Integrity values the cultural capital of African American males and its role in supporting persistence at the community college.

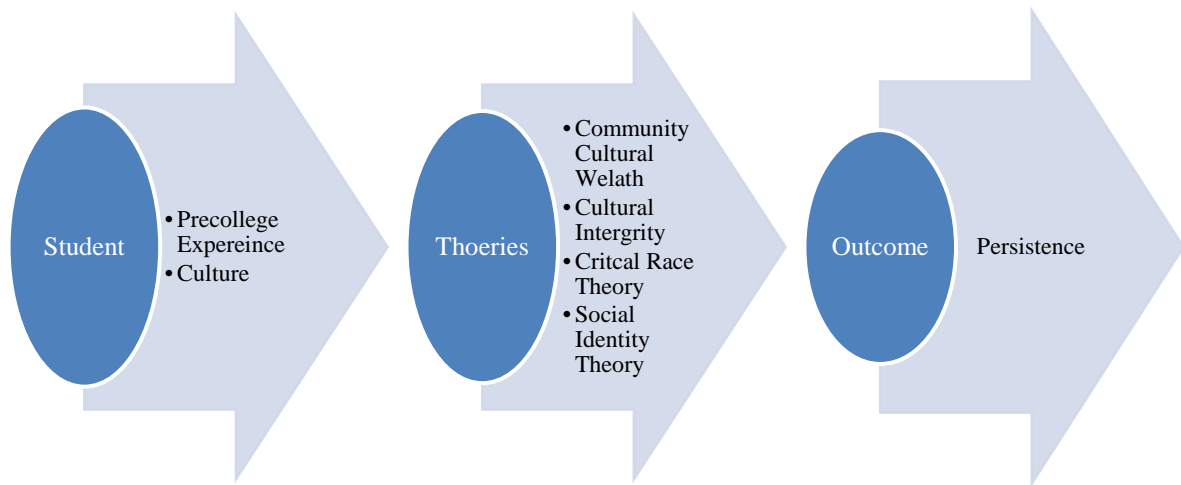


Figure 2. Theoretical Model of Culture and African American Male Persistence at the Community College

In summation of the theoretical frameworks, CRT holds micro, mezzo and macro implications and applications, while CCW and CI hold micro and mezzo implications and applications. Indicatively, CRT challenges institutions of higher education to evaluate and make policy changes to address the ways in which African American males are viewed and treated in institutions of higher education. That is to say, when institutions of higher education first address at the most practical level that racism is real, and that the difference in treatment of blackness exists, then policy change to redress racism, discrimination, and oppression perpetrated against African American males enrolled in the academy can begin. Consequently, new policy and practice methods, which include CCW and CI, can more effectively contribute to African American male persistence at the community college. Lastly, CCW and CI theories posit that it is imperative for institutions of higher education to leverage the rich elements of African American culture as an agent in African American male persistence.

Relevance for Social Work

Higher education provides a critical opportunity for advancement and serves as the pathway to the American dream for African American males specifically. In addition, Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 served as the foundation upon which minorities have gained freedom and equality in their quest for higher education (“Education and Title IV,” 2015). Furthermore, a core belief of democracy is the notion that it is fair and right that all people regardless of skin color should have equal opportunity to education (“Unchaining Civil Rights,” 2008). While there have been some gains in African American males being admitted to institutions of higher education, the micro, mezzo, and macro barriers and the limited consideration of cultural variables in persistence makes this phenomenon even more important to social work research and consequent practice. Research on African American males and persistence serves to inform educational policy and practices in the micro, mezzo, and macro environments in higher education. Moreover, social work educators and practitioners’ employed by the academy are key partners in advocating for more equitable educational policies and practices that support African American male persistence. In addition, discrimination and racism at the individual and institutional level pose a real barrier that impacts African American male persistence. Therefore, it is paramount to complete scholarly research on the intersection of culture and persistence in order to assert institutional policy and practice change with regard to culture, discrimination, racism, prejudice, African American males, and persistence at the community college.

Aims and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to understand the intersection between culture and African American male persistence to graduation from the community college. The research questions are as follows:

1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?
2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In completing the literature review, Ebscohost was the database utilized. More specifically, full text, peer reviewed journals that contained the words *retention, persistence, culture, African American male, student, community college, education, higher education* was searched. The initial search yielded more than 1000 studies conducted since 1971. The 1000 or so studies included theories, and theorists, and subtopics related to the primary phenomenon of culture, persistence, and African American males at the community college. Next, the key word combination of *African American males, persistence, community college, and culture* was searched in Ebscohost. This search yielded an estimated 600 full text, peer reviewed journals. Of those 600 or so articles reviewed, approximately 150 articles emerged creating three distinct bodies of literature. The three distinct bodies of literature included in this review are the classic perspective of student retention, the retention and African American males view, and the culture and persistence view.

The three identified themes that emerged from the extent literature explains the need for further research to explore the following questions:

1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?
2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?

Lastly, this review of the literature serves to inform and guide the research methodology about the role of culture and how African American males persist at the community college.

Classic View of Retention

The classic literature of student retention argues that a student's academic and social success in college rests on the ability of the student to adjust and integrate to both the academic and social environment of the college (Bean, 1980; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975). More specifically, the classic review of student retention explicates and provides contrasts and criticisms of Vincent Tinto's (1975) student integration theory. Tinto's theory is the most referenced source in all the classic and contemporary literature on student retention (Bean, 1980; Harris & Wood, 2003, 2016; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008, 2011, 2012; Passarella & Terenzini 1998, 1979, 1980, 1999). Tinto's early research is an expansion of Spady's (1971) seminal work on the process of drop out. Both Tinto and Spady's influential research provide descriptive variables that influence dropout. In addition, both Tinto and Spady's theory and models find its beginnings in Durkheim's (1897) classic theory on suicide. Durkheim's work advanced the idea that the more socially integrated a person is the less likely that person is to commit suicide. Similarly, Tinto's and Spady's theories and models submit that the more socially integrated students are in the college or university environment the less likely they are to drop out. Both Tinto and Spady are in agreement that drop out is not an event but a longitudinal process that occurs through interactions between students and the academic and social systems of the college environment. Both historical and contemporary researchers are in agreement that drop out is a process that includes dynamics in the institutional environment, dynamics in student and faculty interactions, and dynamics that occur during peer social interactions (Bush & Bush 2010; Bean, 1985; Harris & Wood, 2015; Passarella & Terenzini, 1980).

In further review, Tinto's (1975) theory and consequent model incorporates personal, psychological, and institutional variables as an explanation for student departure. More specifically, Tinto explains the precollege background including the student's family background as related to the college integration progress. Spady's simplistic model does not include details about the students' precollege background. However, despite the differences identified in precollege experiences, Tinto and Spady agree that the responsibility for learning and integration lies within the student and his commitment to the goal of earning a college degree. Moreover, both scholars assert that it is the student's sole responsibility to engage with academic systems, which include his peer group and the faculty to make academic and social integration a reality. While Tinto places a student's commitment to both his own goals and institutional goals early on in the integration process, and again later at the end of the process of drop out, Spady places the student's commitment to the institution as the last step before the drop out decision (Figures 2 and 3).

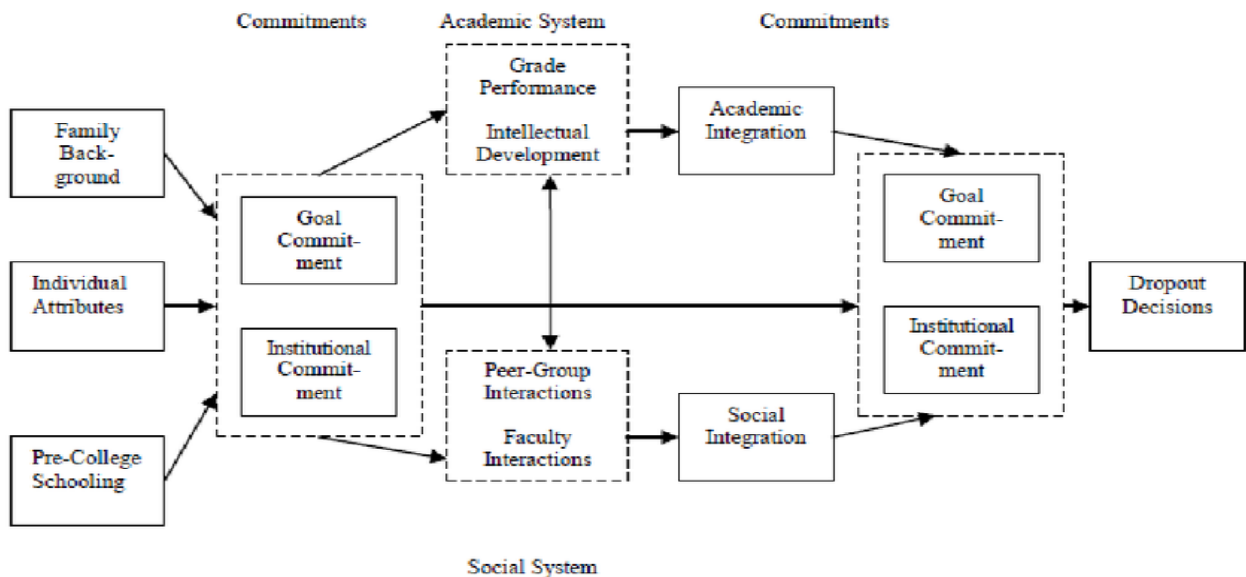


Figure 3. Adapted from Tinto, V., (1993) *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press.

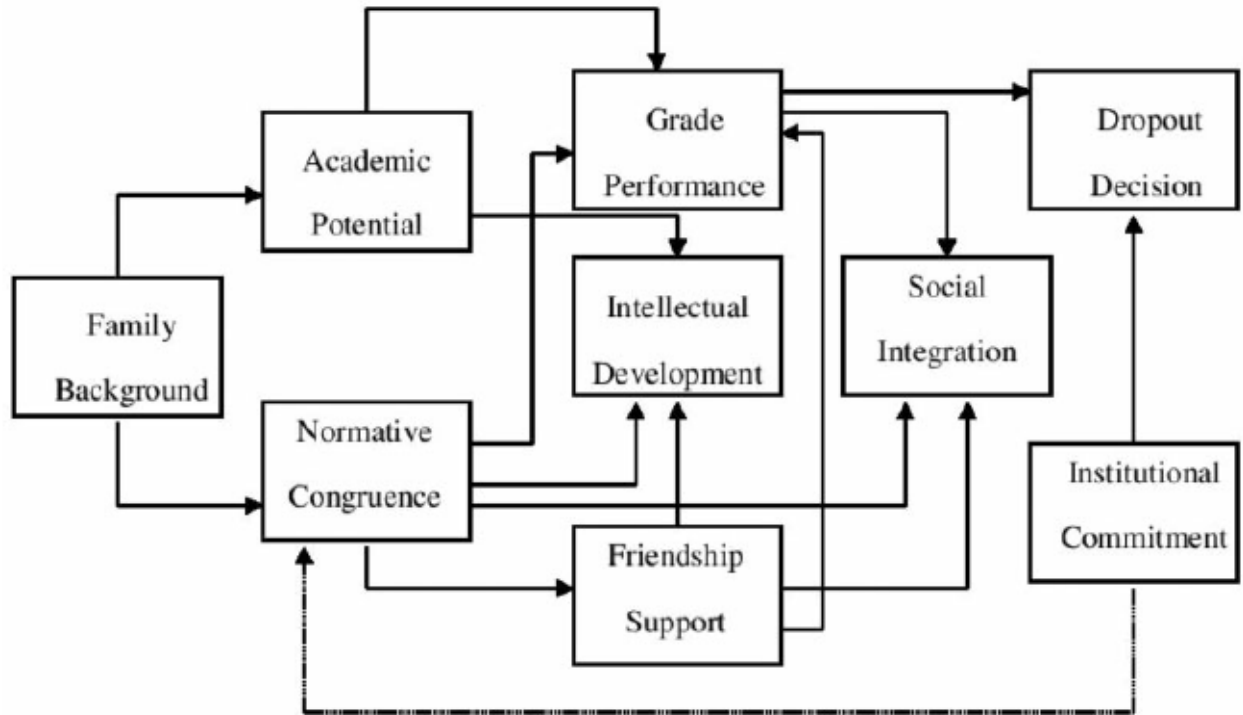


Figure 4. Adapted from Spady, W. (1970). Dropouts from Higher Education: An Interdisciplinary review and Synthesis, *Interchange*, 1(1), 109-121

The implication of the placement of commitments in Tinto's model suggests that drop out is a process by which students are thinking about commitments to personal and institutional goals throughout the educational process, well before the drop out decision is made. However, Spady's model suggests that in the students drop out process, students are not thinking about commitments until the end of the process, right before the drop out decision occurs (see Figures 1 and 2). Moreover, Spady's model does not include the student's commitment to his individual goal of earning a college degree. The implication here is that in Spady's model students are focused on social integration more than on academic integration.

An additional difference between Tinto's and Spady's theory and model can be seen in that Tinto's theory and model considers social and academic integration, while Spady's

model only considers social integration (see Figures 1 and 2). Thus, Tinto's theory suggests that both socialization and academic integration have an impact on a student's decision to either persist or to drop out. Moreover, Tinto suggests that academic integration is more important than social integration in goal commitment to persist and graduate. However, Spady's beginning model indicates that social integration is the only dynamic in the drop out decision. Both Tinto and Spady assert the traditional view of the role that grades play in the drop out decision. More specifically, if a student has poor grades, his decision to drop out is more of an "involuntary" decision, than a "voluntary" decision as the college or university suspends or withdraws students for poor grade performance (Spady, 1970, p. 111). In essence, the decision to drop out is made for the student because of poor grades, so the student leaves the college involuntary. Another difference between Tinto and Spady is that while Tinto considers the role of faculty in the drop out decision, Spady does not include faculty but only includes friendship support in the drop out decision (see Figures 1 and 2). Tinto further clarifies the faculty's role as responsible for the students "intellectual development" (see Figure 1), and the student-faculty interaction in the classroom enhances intellectual development and consequently supports grade performance, which ultimately impacts the drop out decision (Tinto, 1975 p.109). Several contemporary researchers concur with Tinto seminal research that faculty are essential in the retention/persistence puzzle (Astin, 1993; Bean, 1985; Bush & Bush, 2010; Halpin, 1990; Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood & Turner, 2010). For example, Astin (1993) states that "faculty interaction with students both formally and informally correlates with the student's ability to persist through college" (p. 46). In addition, Halpin (1990), in a quantitative study, set out to apply Tinto's theory to freshman persistence at the community college and found that faculty interaction

explained variance in rates of freshman persistence in the community college setting. In essence, faculty interaction does impact student persistence at the community college.

Taken as a whole, Tinto's (1975) theory of student integration implies that a student's personal background characteristics, educational and occupational goals, and degree of academic and social involvement helps to predict persistence or departure. Tinto's seminal work, based on Spady's model, provides the foundation for research on student persistence.

In summary, Tinto (1993) in his later work explains that a dynamic process occurs whereby students bring precollege experiences along with commitments into the academic environment, and these commitments are tested by academic and social systems. From these tests students, make a decision to hold fast to their commitments to personal and institutional goals or make the decision to drop out.

Tinto's (1975) student integration theory is considered to be the grandfather of student integration theory and it is therefore widely revered in student persistence scholarship. However, there are criticisms of Tinto's work that solicit further exploration. The themes of criticism revolve around the generalizability of Tinto's early model to other groups, specifically African American males and community college students (Anumba, 2015; Berry & Candis, 2013; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2013; Bean, 1980; Bush & Bush, 2010; Guiffridia & Douthit, 2010; Guiffrida, 2006; Karp, Hughs, & Ogara, 2010; Ladson- Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson- Billings, 2010; McCubbin, 2003; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Passarella & Terenzini, 1978,1979,1980,1991; Tierney, 1999; Wilds & Ebberts, 2002; Wood & Harris, 2015).

In terms of generalizability of Tinto's (1975) theory to community college students, Karp, Hughs & Ogara (2010), in their qualitative analysis of students in an urban community college setting, found that students at the community college do not socially integrate through traditional methods of clubs or activities, because community college students do not live on campus. Thus, they are not involved in the same way that students who live on campus at a four-year school are, so they do not become integrated. However, Karp, et.al. (2010), posit that community college students exhibit persistence through information networks, where students gather around a common goal of a particular course or assignment and share information. It is here that the academic and social integration process occurs. Wild and Ebbers' (2002) further critique Tinto's model for its lack of generalizability in that his model applies to traditional age students who live on campus, and this was the standard used to measure persistence. Wild and Ebbers (2002) submit that Tinto's model does not consider community college students who are not homogenous due to difference in work and family dynamics. In essence, community college students work differently and interact with family differently. Moreover, it is difficult to generalize definitions and measures developed for four- year institutions and to apply them to two- year schools.

Another criticism of Tinto's model is that this model does not consider the diversity of students in the persistence discussion. More specifically, Passarella and Terenzini (1991) presume that Tinto's model marginalizes African American males in particular because it does not consider the positive cultural values such as family and the community environment as factors in persistence. Tierney (1999) further argues that Tinto's theory of integration, with its separation of African Americans from the community is "cultural

suicide” (p. 82). More specifically, Tinto’s is asking African American students to give up the very cultural elements of family (nuclear, extended, and fictive), collective group, and community, which are variables that sustain many African American students in their efforts to persist. Several researchers are in agreement with Tierney, in that the dynamics of race, culture, and academic and social integration are complex and require further exploration through the lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Anumba, 2015; Berry & Candis, 2013; Gufrida, 2006; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Museus & Quaye, 2009).

An additional criticism of Tinto’s (1975) model comes from colleagues such as Bean (1980), who puts forth that Tinto’s model describes but does not explain dropout. Furthermore, Tinto’s model is limited in application because it does not consider background variables that are important to student persistence. Bean hypothesizes that specialized background variables of academic, psychosocial, and environmental factors are as important as academic/ grade performance. In addition, Bean suggests that other precollege variables that are in the African American student’s environment shape persistence. This research aligns with Bean’s seminal work in that the precollege variable of the African American males’ cultural background, and how culture shapes persistence needs to be explored further.

An additional criticism of Tinto and Spady is that their models take a deficit perspective of students, assuming that if students do not conform to identified variables, the end result is drop out (Harper, 2012; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Mccubbin, 2003, Passarella & Terenzini, 1980). This mindset does not consider the strengths (including cultural strengths) that are inherent in an African American male’s ability to persist at the community college.

Consequently, more research is needed to explore the cultural strengths that enable African American males to persist and graduate from the community college. Accordingly, the next section of the literature review will explicate the emphasis on African American males as related to persistence.

Seminal Work on Retention of African American Males at the Community College

As the population of African American males enrolled at the community college and other institutions of higher education grew, it became essential to produce scholarship that spoke specifically about student persistence (retention) as applied to the diverse educational experiences and needs of African American men enrolled in the academy. The more contemporary scholarship on persistence as related to African American males expands Tinto's social and academic integration model, and posits that there are additional variables that apply to the persistence of African American males. These variables include additional background factors, societal factors, and socio-ecological or mezzo environmental factors that support or hinder African American male persistence (Harper, 2012; Harris & Wood, 2003, 2016; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001; Strayhorn, 2008, 2011, 2012; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood, Harris & White, 2015). To date, hundreds of scholarly studies have been conducted to investigate factors that impact African American male success in higher education. Most of the literature surveyed focused on African American males at four year institutions of higher education. Moreover, researchers have considered African American males in higher education enrolled at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) and at HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and University's). It was not until Harris and Wood (2003, 2016) and Wood and Harris (2015) seminal works on African American males and persistence at the community college that

the research began to also focus on African American males at the community college. Tinto's theory about student integration informs the seminal work about African American males and persistence at the community college. Although the validity and reliability of Tinto's work has been questioned with regard to its application to African American males and students at the community college, scholars continue to reference Tinto in the extant literature. While Tinto focused on dropout from a deficit approach, seminal works on African American males in this research emphasize retention (persistence and retention were used interchangeable in the extant literature). Moreover, these contemporary scholars provide concrete implications for future research. Some of the researchers make reference to elements of culture (Harris & Wood, 2015; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood, Harris & White, 2015). However, much of the contemporary scholarship on African American males and persistence at the community college focus on the student's precollege experience and educational environment without direct reference to the role of culture in the persistence puzzle (Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2003,2004; Harper, 2012; Strayhorn, 2008, 2011, 2012).

The contemporary scholar who led the charge of generating scholarship about the experience of African American men enrolled in four-year institutions is Harper (2009, 2012). Harper powerfully explains that there is a need for research that provides informative insights from African American men who have experienced college differently. More specifically, Harper's groundbreaking qualitative research on African American males who were actively engaged inside and outside the classroom, did well academically, graduated, and went on to pursue education beyond the bachelor's degree. In short, Harper's research emphasized persistence of African American men from an anti-deficit

view. The themes that emerged from his research included experience with admission, tuition payment, college choice and the first year of school, as well as the challenges of engagement and a productive response to racism (Harper, 2012). The findings tell the story of how these African American men were able to engage and persist to graduate.

Moreover, the consequent report based on Harper's (2012) research includes positive images and rich qualitative narratives of the academic and social successes of African American males. For example, Rubin Pusha III was a candidate for a Jurisprudence Degree (JD), while Samuel Alemayehu earned a MS from Stanford University and is the CEO and Chairman of a mobile technology company with holdings in twenty-two African Countries (Harper, 2012).

Harper in this extensive work provides recommendations for improving African American male's success in college. The recommendations range from equipping families with college knowledge, to building summer bridge programs for student success (Harper, 2012). In conclusion, Harper's research puts forth a call for "a more balanced and multidimensional understanding of Black men's lives in school and other social contexts" (p. 25). Basically, Harper is articulating that African American males enrolled in the academy are not monolithic but diversified. Comparable to Harper's (2012) research, Warde (2008) completed a qualitative study of African American males who completed baccalaureate degrees, and were currently pursuing advanced degrees. The findings from Warde's (2008) study found four major themes that lead to African American male persistence:

1. Having an epiphany about the importance of higher education
2. Having the (financial) resources - money for tuition and books
3. Having a mentor - professors, fraternity brothers, a high school teacher or a staff member

4. Resilience when faced with obstacles – internal drive and/or encouragement from family and friends kept resilience alive

Harper (2012) and Warde (2008) posit an anti- deficit approach when considering African American male persistence. In addition, Harper (2012), and Warde (2008) advance that African American males are diverse in background characteristics, and distinct in how they persist. The criticism of Harper and Warde’ work can be found in that their research is based on African American males from Ivy League institutions and graduate students respectively. To be more specific, Ivy League students tend to have variables above and beyond culture in their precollege experiences that better equips them to persist. In addition, graduate students have gained greater mastery of the methodology of persistence.

In addition to Harper (2012) and Warde (2008), there are several other researchers who contributed to the body of knowledge about persistence of African American males enrolled at four-year institutions of higher education. For example, Strayhorn (2008) completed a quantitative investigation to explore a correlation between African American men, supportive relationships, and academic success. The findings of Strayhorn’s work identify the correlation between supportive relationships with faculty, staff, and peers on campus and higher rates of satisfaction and consequent academic success. Moreover, Strayhorn (2008) concludes with a call for an institutional response from Academic and Student Affairs Administrators for effective intervention to aid African American males in persistence. Additional research by Strayhorn (2008 and 2011) summarizes the importance of summer bridge programs and the importance of focusing on the resilience of African American males. In addition, Strayhorn (2012) completed research on the *Satisfaction and Retention among African American Men at Two-Year Community Colleges*. The findings of this research identified a statistical link between social integration and satisfaction in

college. In essence, Strayhorn confirms that there is a connection between social integration, student satisfaction, and consequent persistence. Interestingly, all of Strayhorn's research refers to Tinto's (1975) model of retention and makes no reference to Harper's (2012) work on successful African American males in the academy.

In addition to Strayhorn (2008, 2001, and 2012), Bush and Bush (2010), and Bush, Bush, and Wilcoxon (2009) significantly contributed to the body of knowledge about retention of African American males in the academy. More specifically, the research by Bush and Bush describes the experience of African American males enrolled at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions). Bush and Bush's mixed method study examined the impacts of the community college on the academic achievement of African American males and their experience when they transferred to four- year schools. In summary, the research study findings are alarming in that Black male's perceptions while on the community college campus identify an experience of "Anglo-European teaching philosophy with absence of minority role models; a lack of faculty and peer involvement; a hostile and unfriendly campus environment; institutional abandonment; poor academic advising in a highly racial school" (Bush & Bush, 2010, p. 44). Several others researchers reported that African American students had similar experiences at PWIs, and that these experiences made it difficult to persist (Allen, 1992; Davis, 1994; Harper, 2009; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). For example, Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso's (2000) qualitative examination of racism experienced by African American males at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) describes the racial microaggressions by faculty, staff, and students where African American students essentially go on autopilot to survive these almost daily

microaggressions while enrolled in the academy. Conversely, students enrolled at HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and University's) rarely reported experiences with racial microaggressions (Allen, 1992; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014).

Bush and Bush (2010) state that community colleges have to begin to address persistence from an institutional perspective instead of from a cognitive approach, which emphasizes the deficit perspective. Bush and Bush's (2010) research takes a bold stance in its assertion that instead of blaming the student or the student's background, institutions have to change policies and procedures to meet the needs of the students they serve, through providing a genuine welcome. Lastly, Bush and Bush's (2010) work is cited throughout the literature on retention on Black males in the Academy (Harris & Wood 2003, 2016; Ingram, William, Coaxum, Hilton, & Harrell, 2016; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014).

Next, Bush, Bush and Wilcoxon (2009) offers an analysis of emerging African American male initiatives within the California Community College system. This research provides an overview of program, practices, and administration, including roles and functions of stakeholders involved with African American male initiatives. Bush et.al, present an anti-deficit view of African American men and posits that African American males have the ability to identify, access, and utilize resources. However, institutional barriers inhibit African American males' ability to identify, access, and utilize college resources. In addition to an anti-deficit view, Bush et.al, advance Critical Race theory and Afrocentricity as frameworks to develop and implement African American male initiatives at the community college. In addition, a prescription for practices that are culturally

relevant and from an African/African American perspective are recommended. These recommendations align with this research study, which will consider the role of culture in African American male's persistence at the community college.

In reviewing literature by Bush and Bush (2010), and Bush et.al. (2009), Harper (2012), and Strayhorn (2008, 2011, 2012), it is noted that there is a commitment to African American male success at four-year schools. Moreover, Bush and Bush, Bush etc.al, Strayhorn, and Harper (2012) provide significant research that contributed to the body of knowledge about persistence and African American males at academy. However, the more contemporary voice on African American males at the community college continued to remain mostly silent in the scholarly literature.

Harris and Wood (2003, 2016), Wood and Harris (2013), and Wood (2012, 2013a,2013b, 2014), provide the missing voice of the African American male's experience in the community college by expanding the body of knowledge with scholarly research on persistence. More specifically, in Harris and Wood's (2003) research on published literature found that "student success is shaped by interactions between precollege considerations occurring prior to the African American males' matriculation to the community college, and the five dynamic and interrelated domains that manifest prominently during African American males' enrollment in community college" (p.176). In addition, Harris and Wood's (2016) research describes the application of the Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) Model (Figure 3). This model explains the process by which students are engaged and remain at the community college and persist to graduation.

Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) Model

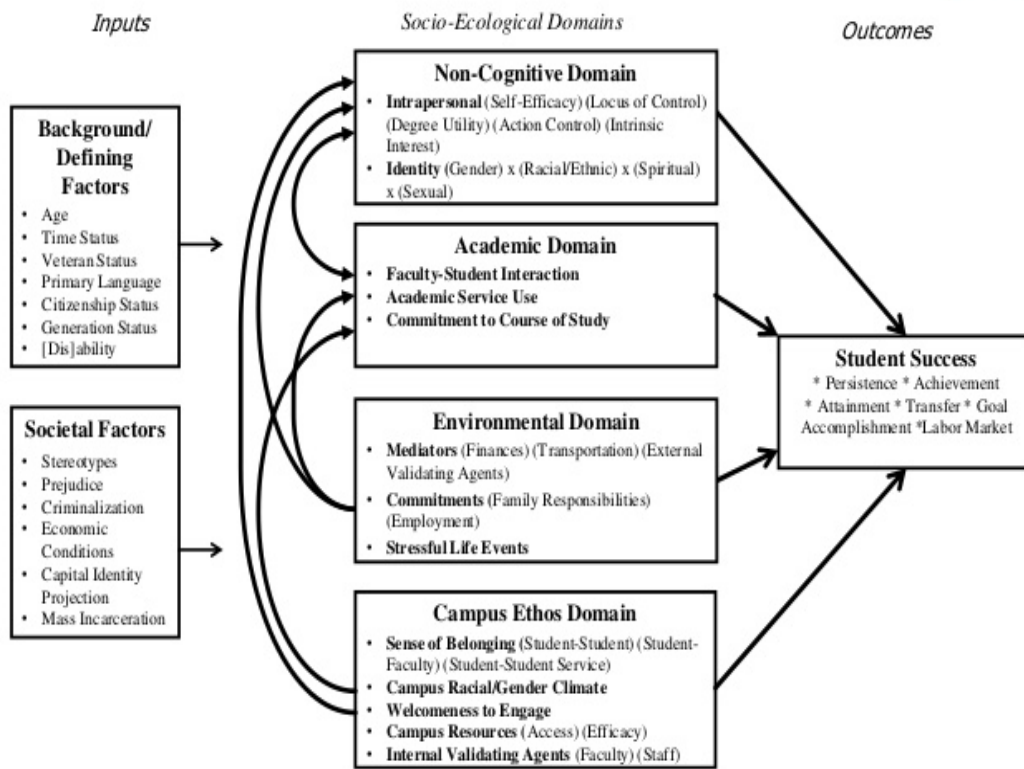


Figure 5. Adapted from Wood J., Harris III, F., & White, K. (2015). *Teaching men of color in the community college: A guidebook*. San Diego, CA: Montezuma Publishing.

The SEO Model applies to men of color in general; however, the model focuses more exclusively on African American males (Harris & Wood, 2016). In addition, the SEO Model is informed by Astin’s (1993) Input Environment Outputs model (Figure 4).

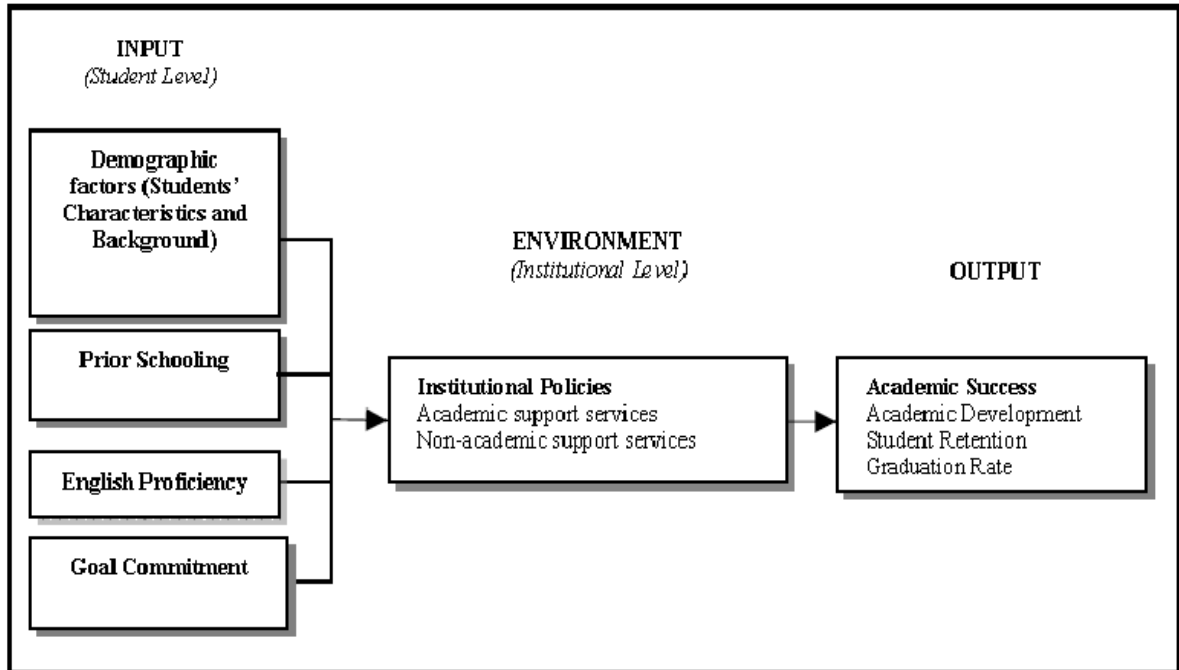


Figure 6. Adapted from Astin 1993. Student Involvement: A developmental theory for Higher Education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.

In specific Astin’s model suggests that the college environment has a significant impact on a student’s educational experience and consequent persistence. The college environment includes the frequency of student- to-student and student-to-faculty interaction (see Figure 4). In addition, Astin’s model considers the role of “non-academic support services” in persistence (Astin, 1993, p. 60). Non- academic support services include “student success courses, academic and career services and financial aid and advising” (Community College Research Center, “Frequently Asked Questions,”2017). In essence, Astin (1993), suggests that nonacademic support services influence a student’s persistence.

In review of Harris and Wood’s (2016) SEO model, the inputs in this model include background, and societal factors, while the socio-ecological domains include variables outside the student’s domain, and the combination of inputs and socio-ecological domains

leads to the outcome of persistence (see Figure 3). One point that the model explains is that some of the domains such as the student's goals, background, and societal norms predate the student's matriculation to the community college, and therefore cannot be addressed by the college. Several other researches indicated Harris and Wood (2016) precollege considerations and provided implications in African American male persistence (Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001 Wood & Hilton, 2012). For example, Wood and Hilton (2012) add spirituality as a precollege consideration, while Harper (2012) refers to spirituality and religion as a part of the student's background information but does not consider this variable significant in persistence. In addition, the research on spirituality/religion as an element of African American culture is a relatively new phenomenon and remains largely unexplored. However, because "spirituality is a core element of African American culture," it is noted that this is an area of research that deserves further exploration (Wood & Hilton, 2012, p. 29).

Lastly, Harris and Wood (2016) provide information about research direction and gaps in the literature, including the need for more quantitative research. More importantly, the need for new theoretical frameworks that consider African American males enrolled at the community college. Suggested theoretical frameworks include Critical Race Theory (CRT), Community Cultural Wealth Theory, Validation Theory and the Anti Deficit Achievement Framework. Finally, in describing Harris and Wood's (2016) SEO model, researchers note how one domain impacts the other and that the model should be used for program design. Finally, Harris and Woods (2016) SEO Model is not considered a theory at this point, and in reviewing the literature most researchers make reference to Tinto's (1975) Departure /Student Integration Theory.

In conclusion of this portion of the literature review on persistence of African American males at the community college, it is important to complete further research on the socio-ecological domains that integrate cultural elements, which ultimately promote persistence. Moreover, it is important that future scholarship consider culture as a precollege variable and explore how this precollege variable shapes persistence.

Culture and Persistence

The culture and persistence literature explicates the role of the African past, the institution of slavery and its subjugation of African culture, and the emergence of a hybrid African/African American culture (Gomez, 1998; Herskovits, 1958; Holloway, 2005; Mintz & Price, 1992; Ntloedibe, 2006; Stuckey, 2013). More specifically, the culture and persistence literature explores the relationship between an African cultural past and the African American present day culture, and its implications for African American male persistence at the community college (Dubois, 1903; Gomez, 1998; Herskovits, 1958; Mintz & Price, 1992; Ntloedibe, 2006; Stuckey, 2013). In addition, the culture and persistence literature explains the intersectionality between culture and persistence, as related to the dynamics of cultural/ethnic identity (Dennis, Phinney & Chuatecol, 2005; Phinney, 1990, 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990).

African/African American culture warrants further exploration as evidenced in Tinto's (1975) exclusion of culture as a precollege variable in his drop out model. Moreover, the extant literature reviewed on retention of African American males at the community college identified some elements of culture but does not explain how, if, or why these elements of culture correlate with persistence. Furthermore, it is posited that one cannot understand individuals, groups, events, or culture without integrating the contexts of

past and present and the context of micro, mezzo, and macro environments as related to culture. More succinctly, to understand African American males and persistence at the community college, it is important to understand African and African American culture.

Sociologists' explain culture as a set of values and beliefs, language, norms, behaviors, and other non-material and material culture that are passed from one generation to the next (Henslin, 2016; Macionis, 2017; Ritzer, 2016). In terms of African/African American culture, one cannot examine the language, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors of African Americans without exploring connections to Africa (Gomez, 1998; Herskovits, 1958; Holloway, 2015; Mintz & Prince, 1992; Ntloedibe, 2006; Ojo, 1997; Stuckey, 2013). The classic researchers on African culture provide a historical and anthropological view that lays the foundation for understanding African American culture (Gomez, 1998; Herskovits, 1958; Holloway, 2015; Mintz & Prince, 1992; Ntloedibe, 2006; Ojo, 1997; Stuckey, 2013). Stuckey (2013) argues that enslaved Africans preserved and disseminated their culture or Africinity during the middle passage. Africinity is defined as "the quality or state of being African or having African origins" ("Africinity," 2017). Ntloedibe (2006) describes the roots of African American culture as grounded in Africanisms. Ntloedibe (2006) pulls from Dubois' (1903) classic work that posits that one cannot explain the roots of African American culture without reference to Africa because African values, beliefs, and practices played a critical role in the formation of African American culture. Conversely, some historical works on the subject report that there is no connection between African and African American culture, and that all African culture was washed away during the transatlantic slave trade (Herskovits, 1958; Holloway, 2015; Mintz & Prince, 1992; Ntloedibe 2006; Ojo, 1997). However, several anthropologists suggest that elements

of African culture survived and were transmuted and transfigured into a neo African/African American culture (Gomez, 1998; Mintz & Price, 1992). Additionally, it is postulated that a neo- African/African American cultural expression remains and serves as community cultural wealth that can be leveraged by the academy to support African American male persistence. Also these elements of culture are foundational to understanding African American male persistence at the community college. Therefore, it is paramount that additional research continues to explore the relationship between culture and persistence.

In terms of unconventional and contrasting views of culture, and their impact on persistence, the culture of poverty, the cultural ecological, and segmented assimilation theories were considered (Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965; Ogbu, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). First, the Culture of Poverty theory is based on Lewis' (1959) research on the cultural habits of indigenous Mexicans. Lewis' (1959) research explain a culture of poverty as an adaptation and reaction to being poor and marginalized in a capitalist society. Moynihan (1965) adapted Lewis' (1959) research into a report as a part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty program. In short, Moynihan (1965) postulated the culture of poverty is a subculture created by single African American mothers, and the values and beliefs associated with this subculture explain why African American families were not able to socially or economically progress out of poverty. The culture of poverty premise is criticized because it did not consider the societal ills of inequality, discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping of African American families. In addition, the culture of poverty argument postulates a deficit view of African culture (African American families). Harper (2012), warns that the deficit view of African

American males does not aid in persistence but serves as a barrier to persistence. Therefore, the culture of poverty argument supports the research question about mezzo and macro factors that negatively affect African American male persistence to graduation.

Specifically, policy and practices that stereotype or prejudge African American males enrolled in the academy do not aid in their persistence.

In terms of race, immigrants and academic performance, the extant literature demonstrates the complexity of the dynamics of race, immigration and culture in America (Ogbu, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). In addition, the existing literature explores how African and Caribbean immigrants view the dynamics of race, discrimination, prejudice, and education in comparison to African Americans (Ogbu, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Namely, Ogbu (1990) created the Cultural Ecological theory (CET) to explain the school performance of minority students grade K-12. CET asserts that voluntary minorities (African and Caribbean natives who voluntarily come to America), and non-voluntary minorities (mainly African Americans whose ancestors were forced to come to America via slavery) differ in school performance. Specifically, voluntary minorities are relatively more successful in school than involuntary minorities, because voluntary minorities hold community features that include attitudes and behaviors conducive to academic success (Ogbu, 1990). For instance, voluntary minorities learn aspects of mainstream culture and participate in dominant group (White American) cultural “frames of reference,” as necessary to adaptation (Ogbu, 1990, p.48). Meanwhile, involuntary minorities feel strongly that behavior is an expression of group identity, and to adopt the dominant groups behavior or “cultural frames of reference” is to “act White” (Ogbu, 1990, p. 48). Additionally, Ogbu and Simons (1998) point out that “history: how

the minority group acquires minority status and subsequent treatment by White Americans and community forces [including beliefs], impact academic success” (156-160). In short, minority status and how minorities are treated by White Americans, as well as community beliefs lead to cultural adaptations which are expressed or evident in academic performance. The applicability of Ogbu (1990) and Ogbu and Simons (1998) to culture, African American males and persistence at the community college warrant additional research to explore differences in the cultures of voluntary minorities and non-voluntary minorities, as related to persistence at the community college.

Warikoo and Carter (2009), explore the *Cultural Explanations for Racial and Ethnic Stratification in Academic Achievement*. Warikoo and Carter (2009) agree with Ogbu (1990), and Ogbu and Simons (1998) assertion that there are “ethno-racial differences in K-12 schooling and academic performance” (p.366). These “ethno-racial differences” can also be found in the “Segmented Assimilation Theory” (SAT), which advances that second generation immigrants experience assimilation differently than African Americans, and differently than immigrants who came through Ellis Island (p. 380). In addition, these second generation immigrants experience stratification upon arrival in the United States, and there are different segments available to them depending on variables like socioeconomic status, and race (skin color). Consequently, these second generation immigrants are able to forge a path of either upward or downward mobility. Warikoo and Carter (2009) provide implications to consider, including the need to “unpack” the multiple influences of identity in context, and the need to be more intentional in understanding the role of race and ethnic stratification (p. 380). In addition, there is a

call for more comparative research across groups to understand the difference between ethnic groups and academic achievement (Warikoo & Carter 2009).

Also noteworthy in the race, immigrant, ethnic identity and academic achievement discussion is the research of Waters (1996), which references Ogbu (1990) to understand ethnic identity and race relations on college campuses. In addition, Waters (1996) confirms the importance of supportive peer relationships to aid in African American student persistence. In short, Waters (1996) utilizes Ogbu's (1990), "oppositional identity" to discuss how White Americans choose their ethnicities (symbolic ethnicities), and African Americans hold oppositional identities on college campuses (p.444). Waters (1996) posits that since race is a physical marker in the United States, White students can choose to identify their ethnicity, while African American students cannot. It is this lack of choice for African American students that create dynamics around black students "acting White" or concerns about acting "black enough" (p.4). For example, African American students are concerned when around other African American peers that they do not behave or speak in ways that are contrary to the group identity as black. In addition, African American students worry about acting being black enough with their African American peers. Waters (1996) goes on to explicate how the complexity of the ethnic identity of African Americans students is exacerbated when the dynamics of immigrant minorities are added to the race and ethnic identity mix. Furthermore, Waters (1996) confirms that the ethnic identity of black students is more complicated because of racism. In addition, black students tend to prefer socializing with other black students who share some of their cultural elements, so they can "band together with other students in reactive and oppositional ways in the face of racist incidents on campus" (Waters, 1996, p. 446). The implications and applicability of

Waters (1996) research to culture, African American males and persistence discussion, is the need for additional research on oppositional culture, ethnic identity, and immigrant academic persistence.

In further exploration of culture, the elements of culture that were most salient in the extant literature, include values and belief, kinship family bonds (nuclear, extended, and fictive), spirituality, community/collectivism, and identity (individual and group) (Anumba, 2015; Berry & Candi; 2013; Brooks & Allen, 2016; Cole & Arriola, 2007; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Guiffrida, 2003, 2004; Jensen, 2011; Kuh & Love, 2000; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Phinney, 1990; Tierney, 1999; Yosso, 2005). In addition, the existing literature submits that these cultural elements represent rich untapped Cultural Capital (CC) that translates to Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005; Tierney, 1999). Also, the literature summarizes that it is essential for college administration and faculty to consider culture as an agent of African American male persistence and develop policies and programs accordingly (Yosso, 2005).

It is posited that the research questions about culture and persistence relate to the African American males' micro, mezzo, and macro environments. At the micro or individual level, the literature focuses on individual identity. Namely, the concept of individual African American identity is used interchangeably in the extant literature with individual racial identity, cultural identity, and ethnic identity (Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Phinney, 1990, 2006; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Phinney (1990, 2006) describes how identity is shaped by an individual's ethnic/cultural experience, and that identity develops self-esteem and self-efficacy (reference to individual cultural identity in this research also refers to ethnic or racial identity). Moreover, Phinney

discusses the importance of the development of ethnic identity during college years, and how identity development is different for minority groups due to the cultural context. Phinneys' (2006) research on minority students found that the higher the ethnic identity of the students, the more likely that the student's will participate in cultural activities. Additionally, the more the students participate in campus activities, the more socially integrated into the college environment students become, and consequently, the more likely students are to persist to graduation. Conversely, the weaker the minority student's ethnic identification, the less likely that student is to participate in activities (cultural or other activities), to be socially integrated, and persist to graduation. Phinney and Alipuria (1990) explored ethnic identity of college students, where it was hypothesized that ethnic identity would be more important than other identities for minority students. The findings of this study confirmed that ethnic/cultural identity was more important than occupational, sex role, religious, or political identity. The implications from this study illuminate the importance of culture in identity, which holds implications for additional research on African American males and their persistence to graduation from the community college.

In another study about the influence and importance of individual cultural identity, Maramba and Velasquez (2012) explore how/if cultural identity impacted students' campus experiences at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions). The study found that students' who have a strong ethnic identity held a greater sense of competence, a greater sense of belonging, stronger interpersonal relationships, and a greater commitment to persistence. In addition, a stronger ethnic identity was correlated with increased knowledge about the students' ethnic group culture. Also, a stronger cultural identity was correlated with stronger analytical and critical thinking skills, stronger problem solving skills, and greater

intellectual and cognitive development. The implications from this study strongly point to the importance of culture in ethnic groups. Therefore, further exploration of culture as related to the persistence of African American male's as ethnic group at the community college, and their ethnic identification, is warranted.

To further expound cultural identity as related to African American males and persistence, African Americans males in particular are in a quandary when they have to develop and maintain their cultural identity while at the same time maintaining a Western cultural identity. This phenomenon is identified as double consciousness, dual identity or poly culturalism (Dubois, 1903; Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Phinney, 1990; Oysterman, Gant & Ager, 1990). Furthermore, Double Consciousness can be a source of cultural capital for African American males. However, Double Consciousness can cause role strain when African American males are forced to *act White* to blend in with the dominant cultures' identity (Western Culture) (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Ogbu, 2004; Yosso, 2005).

In conclusion regarding the micro context and African American male persistence at the community college, Phinney (1992) developed the Multiethnic Identity Measurement (MEIM) to assess ethnic identity. This measure is widely used, and the MEIM prompted the creation of additional scales to measure ethnic and race identification. However, these scales consider ethnic identity and not cultural identity. Therefore, there is the need for future research to develop quantitative measures of culture.

Next, the mezzo context, as related to culture and persistence, emphasizes family, community, collective group identity, and supportive relationships (including peer and faculty/ student relationships). A review of the extant literature indicates that the elements

of culture in the mezzo environment have the greatest impact on an African American male's ability to persist (Brooks, 2015; Brooks, & Allen 2016; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Guiffrida, 2006; Ingram, Williams, Coaxum, 2016; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Mawhinney, 2012; Morley, 2003; Ntloedibe, 2006; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014; Tierney, 1999; Wei, Ku & Liao, 2011).

Notably, family and kinship bonds are foundational elements of African American culture. Moreover, several studies found that family in African American culture includes kinship bonds, extended, fictive, and "othermothering" relationships (Esposito, 2014; Mawhinney, 2012; Ntloedibe, 2006; Ojo, 1997). These kinship bonds including fictive kin and extended family provide encouragement to persist in pursuit of education, and/or are a resource for emergency financial assistance. In addition, Mawhinney (20012) utilized time-series interviews and class observations to describe othermothering and the cultural differences between African American and White students. In essence, White students defined family as the nuclear family unit, while African American students defined family in terms of nuclear, extended and fictive family. Although African American students stress the importance of family, Tinto (1975) emphasized the need for students to separate themselves from family and kinship bonds to effectively integrate into the college environment. Tierney (1999) criticized Tinto's Integration Theory, regarding its suggestion that African American students cut ties with family members to integrate into the college environment. Tierney asserts that for African American students to leave family in order to integrate into the college environment is equivalent to "cultural suicide" (p. 82-83).

Tierney goes on to recommend that African American students should not be encouraged to deemphasize or cut off family. Instead, Tierney advocates for maintaining family ties.

Also, the alternative, according to Tierney, is the practice of cultural integrity, whereby African American students maintain family and kinship bonds as a source of cultural wealth or community cultural wealth. In essence, Cultural Integrity helps African American males maintain important cultural elements while integrating into the academy, and ultimately aiding in their persistence to graduation. Yosso (2005) further explains the importance of family from a community culture wealth perspective. Yosso describes familial capital as social and personal human resources drawn from a student's extended family. By the same token, Yosso encourages college administrators and student service personnel to engage African American families as leverage for a positive college experience for the student (the family as an agent of persistence).

Brooks (2015) and Brooks and Allen (2016), in their qualitative studies of African American students, found that extended and fictive kin relationships were important in persistence. For example, a grandparent serves to provide encouragement, a meal, nurturance, prayer etc., In addition, an aunt, uncle, and/or cousin who is a college graduate serves as a role model and/or a resource for the student. In addition to extended family, fictive relationships in African American culture include supportive persons and systems that are not biologically related to the student. By the same token developing and maintaining strong non-kin relationships is an important cultural strength in African American families. Brooks (2015) explains that "family (kinship/extended and/or fictive) support can have implications for academic persistence in college students" (p. 830). Jensen (2011) supports Brooks (2015) in the advancement that "for minority students, family support matters greatly in the retention and successful college experience" (p.3). Harper and Wood (2016), Palmer, Wood, Dancy, and Strayhorn (2014) further concur with

Brooks (2015) and Jensen (2011) that family support is critical for African American male persistence in the academy. Palmer, Wood, Dancy, and Strayhorn (2014) denote the importance of the African American mother's support of her son as key to persistence. Additional research on the correlation between African American mothers, African American males and persistence warrant further research.

An additional fictive family member noted in the literature is the "othermother" (Mawhinney, 2012). The concept of othermother/othermothering gained minimal traction in the existing scholarship, however is noteworthy in this literature review (Esposito; 2014, Guiffredi, 2005; Mawhinney, 2012). Mawhinney (2012) characterizes the term othermothering as a term coined by Collins (2000), whereby the African American community, out of the necessity during slavery, when after slave auctions, had fictive kin who would step into mothering responsibilities for orphaned children. Mawhinney further explains that African American women, especially teachers and faculty members, have organically taken on these familial roles for their students. Mawhinney (2012) provides a powerful qualitative autoethnography and personal narrative to describe her professional experience with other mothering as an African American tenured faculty member at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). Additional research on other mothering describes how other mothering serves as advocacy and support for African American student persistence. Esposito (2014) describes the role, boundaries, process, and importance of othermothering as a method to aid students of color in persistence. The body of scholarly literature on other mothering is scant, therefore there is a need for additional research on this topic to explore its role in the African American male persistence dilemma.

In further review of the literature about the mezzo environment relationships it was found that supportive relationships between students, peers, and/or faculty are also essential to student's persistence at the community college. Tinto, (1993) in his later work correlates faculty/student relationships as key to persistence. Essentially, Tinto posits that personal attention from a faculty member makes both academic and social integration easier. Palmer, Wood, Dancy, and Strayhorn (2014) further explain that the faculty/student relationship can facilitate engagement, student learning, and personal development, which ultimately aids persistence. Museus and Quaye (2009) identify peer group members, faculty, and/or student organizations as "cultural agents or cultural translators" (p.71). Further, these cultural agents/cultural translators serve to help students navigate their home life (through home visits) and campus life simultaneously.

Additionally, research validates the importance of student organizations as havens for African American males (Harper & Quaye, 2017; Meseus & Quaye 2009; Palmer et.al, 2014). These organizations can serve as outlets for cultural expression and as a respite for cultural *being*, and ultimately as aids in persistence (Guiffrida, 2003 and 2004; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Harper & Quaye, 2007). Also, ethnic specific organizations are especially necessary for African American males enrolled in PWIs. However, Strayhorn (2008) cautions against some supportive relationships that are social at the expense of academic support. For example, fraternities that emphasize social and not academic support or friends (on and off campus) that highlight college social life at the expense of academic life. The literature about student organizations may not apply as easily to community college students as the extent literature mostly refers to four year institutions and their students. Lastly, fraternities do not hold charters at most two year schools.

In terms of faculty/student interaction as key to persistence, an interesting point in the literature described how African American students in general are more likely to seek support from African American faculty members because of the perceived African American faculty member's provision of more positive support and othermothering (Palmer et.al, 2014; Guiffrida, 2003; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2007; Museus & Quaye, 2009). Moreover, the research also makes clear the need for the academy to hire more African American faculty specifically to meet the needs of African American males in their quest for persistence to graduation from the academy.

Next, the literature points out that African American students are more likely to experience a mezzo environment/campus climate that projects negative, racist and stereotypical viewpoints of these students (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Harper, 2009; Harper & Wood, 2016; Oyeserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). For example, Harper (2009) describes how African American males at PWIs (Predominantly White Institutions) are "niggered" by White students at PWI's when stereotyped and then stigmatized as "dumb jocks, Black male criminals from the local community who do not belong on campus..., and/or as underprepared "at-Risk" students who all emerged from low-income families and urban Ghettos" (p. 700). Another example of the negative campus climate, Wei, Ku, and Liao (2011) discuss how African American males must negotiate their identities at schools by "disconfirming the four d's: dangerous, deviant, dumb, and deprived" (p. 1219). In addition, Wei, et.al (2011), describe how African American males are perceived as a threat in the academic and social spaces on campus. Additionally, while on campus, African American males are more likely to experience unchecked microaggressions. Also, administration, faculty, and staff hold

deficit perspectives of African American males on college campuses. In addition, Palmer, et.al. (2014) describe how African American men at the community college perceive faculty as “unsupportive and apathetic toward their success” (p. 70). In addition, Brooms and Davis (2017) found that non-African American faculty, staff, and students view African American males as “niggardly,” where blackness is equivalent to being “a criminal, a person of suspect, a thug or a threat” (p. 307-308). Harper and Wood (2016) report that stereotypes of African American males stem from media portrayals and that these stereotypes are the opposite of African males. Expressly, African American males are motivated to succeed in college, and have honorable goals, dreams, and civic desires to create and build a better future for themselves their families, communities, and larger society (Harper & Wood, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative that college administration address the negative campus climate and identify ways to dismantle these harmful deterrents to African American male persistence. Furthermore, addressing the negative campus climate is essential to the creation of an environment that fosters academic success for *all* students.

Next, some of the mezzo environmental challenges to persistence that African American males face can also be found in the macro environment. More specifically, the institutions of racism, discrimination, prejudice, oppression, and white privilege as well as stereotypes impact African American males enrolled in community colleges specifically. Cramer and McElveen (2003) powerfully state that “racism is not a popular concept and that the impacts of racism are not fad” (p. 42). Brondolo, Brandy, Pencille, Beatty, and Contrada (2009) state that racism is a “highly prevalent phenomenon” in United States culture (p.64). Put another way, racism is embedded in society, and although the civil war

abolished slavery, and the civil rights era ended legalized discrimination, the more obvious racial and ethnic barriers of inequality remain (Brondolo et. al., 2009). These first statements about racism support the first assumption of Critical Race Theory that racism is a fundamental part of United States culture (Ladson-Billing & Tate 1995; Ladson-Billing, 2010). More succinctly, racism is embedded in the fabric of society. Moreover, racism is a global issue as evidenced by my recent travels to South Africa and my experience with *race* in a post-apartheid South Africa. Notably, evidence of racism was found in a race structure that places Black South Africans at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. In addition, racism was evident in South Africa where although the government and the political system are run by Black South Africans (on the surface, at least) the majority of Black South Africans remain at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. My experience in South Africa demonstrated that when institutions of racism, discrimination, and prejudice are erected, they are not easily dismantled, even when laws state that these institutions are no more. The same principle of racism as an institution applies to the United States. It has been more than 150 years since the abolishment of the enslavement of Africans and 53 years since legal segregation. However, racism, discrimination, and prejudice still remain embedded in the fabric of society. For example, institutions such as higher education were created and rooted in racism, in that historically, higher education was afforded to some in the United States and not to others. Further, this unequal access to higher education, allowed for policies and a learning environment that perpetuated racism at the institutional level. In like manner, current racism, discrimination, and prejudice impact policies and the learning environment that affect the lived experience, including persistence efforts, of African American males in institutions of higher education.

While CRT posits that racism is embedded in the fabric of society, CRT also exposes racial inequality in educational policies and practices including the power dynamics of White privilege. White privilege is evident in institutions of higher education, as well as other institutions, that create policies and take actions (knowingly and unknowingly) that perpetuate inequality while said policies were designed to eliminate inequality (Iverson, 2007). In short, CRT challenges all policymakers and practitioners in institutions of higher education to openly acknowledge who has the power to shape institutional policy and how this knowledge and power is used to reproduce society's racial inequities in institutions of higher education. To be more specific, when institutions of higher education create policies without the voices of those groups (African Americans) that the policies impact, institutions of higher education end up establishing policies that do not alleviate racism, but perpetuate it. For example, Cramer and McElveen (2003) explain how race has been deemphasized in social work scholarship and practice by way of embracing "multicultural approaches, pluralism, and diversity" (p. 42) Cramer and McElveen posit that these approaches dilute attention as to how *race* matters. Furthermore, Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) explain how institutions of higher education may hold well-meaning intentions in using diversity and inclusive language in their policies and practices. However, in doing so, the institutions are not addressing the underlying assumptions and problems of racism and its counterparts of prejudice, oppression, discrimination and White privilege.

For example, college policy asserts zero tolerance of racism while Whites are permitted to carry out acts of racism without recourse (Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2007). In essence, when racism, discrimination, prejudice, and White privilege are not addressed

in practice African American males are adversely impacted. In addition, Smith, Yosso and Solórzano (2007) describe an example of how African American males endure daily racial stereotypes from racially primed White students who view African American males as “black misandry” (p.563). In addition, Smith et.al, point out when African American males are stereotyped as “lazy, unintelligent, violent, uninterested in working for a living, etc.,” these views do not aid in persistence efforts (p. 563). Lastly, these views of African American males must be analyzed utilizing the lens of CRT to begin dismantling these deterrents of persistence.

Finally, to assist in the effort to dismantle the deterrents to African American male persistence, CRT researchers offer the following:

1. Scholars should engage in additional research on how racism, discrimination, White privilege, and oppression impact African American males and persistence to graduation (Brondolo, et.al, 2009; Cramer & McElveen, 2003; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Jackson, 2008).
2. College administration and student services should make greater efforts to engage more African American employees in developing conceptual tools to assist in understanding the ongoing impact of racism (Cramer & McElveen, 2003). This includes hiring more African American faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. College administrators, faculty, and staff should utilize systems intervention with purposeful actions, including a solid plan of action beginning with the assembling of a multiracial change team that includes key stakeholders, including African American males (Griffith, Mason, Yonas, Eng, Jefferies, Pihcik & Parks, 2007).
4. College administration, faculty and staff should first gain an understanding of CRT, then utilize CRT to evaluate current policies and practices. In addition, college personal should use CRT to craft and implement different policies and practices (Iverson, 2007).

Smith et al. (2007) posit that it is the job of institutions of higher education to help eliminate hostile campus climates and to provide a space for African American males that includes African American culture as an agent in student persistence. Moreover, Iverson

(2007) asserts that CRT provides an analytic lens so that systems and institutions of higher education can “begin the process of naming and dismantling racism in educational practice and policy making” (p. 607).

In summary, the three distinct bodies of literature provide a good foundation of the historical and contemporary scholarship on student persistence. First, the classic literature based on Tinto’s (1975) seminal work on student integration. This theory and model posit that the key to students’ social and academic integration rests in their commitment to personal and institutional goals. Moreover, Tinto’s original work places the responsibility for social and academic integration solely on students.’ Criticisms of Tinto’s early work include its applicability to African American males, and applicability to community college students. The criticisms’ of Tinto’s work lead to a plethora of research on retention of African American males in the academy. More specifically, the emergence of Harris and Wood’s (2016) Socioecological model, which expands Tinto’s original model for applicability to African American males at the community college. Harris and Wood’s model provides a good foundation with its focus on the *mezzo* environment or the college community. However, the model does not provide insight into the application of cultural elements to the micro, *mezzo*, and macro environment. The third section of the literature review points to the micro environment and ethnic/cultural identity, the *mezzo* environment explores the importance of family in African American culture, and the macro environment emphasizes racism and the application of Critical Race Theory to African American male persistence at the community college.

In conclusion, it is evident that the community college is the pathway by which many African American men enter higher education, and a large percentage hold

aspirations to earn an Associate degree (Flowers, 2006; Harris & Wood, 2003, 2016; Strayhorn, 2012; Wood, 2012, 2013, 2014; Wood & Harris, 2015; Wood & Palmer, 2013). However, a large number of African American men never realize their goal of earning a college degree. This phenomenon triggered the response of institutions of higher education to consider new ways to increase rates of persistence of African American males graduating from the community college. The literature is replete with data about the challenge of African American males' persistence to graduation from the community college. The extant literature provides a mostly deficit view of why African American males do not persist. However, the literature does not provide many positive alternatives to the deficit view of this group. In addition, the literature fails to fully explore the role of culture, including the role of family, faith, values, beliefs, rituals, and language, and its impact on persistence. In addition, the literature skims over the details about race, ethnicity, culture, discrimination, oppression, racism, and White privilege, and its impact on African American male persistence. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct additional research to more fully understand the role of culture in African American male persistence at the community college.

Lastly, the overall point about the extant literature reviewed found that there is a need for additional research to fully explore the relationship between culture, African American males and persistence at the community college. In specific, this research study will begin to address the gap in the literature by exploring African American males' perception of culture and how culture played a role in their persistence at the community college.

The next chapter will provide a summary of the proposed methodology to explore the role of culture in African American male persistence at the community college. More specifically, the research study design, information about participants and recruitment, data collection methods, procedures and measures, and the data analysis strategy that will be employed.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The purpose of this research study is to understand the role of culture in African American male persistence to graduation from the community college. This study seeks to explore the following questions:

1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?
2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?

Study Design

The phenomenological research design was selected to explore the role of culture in African American male persistence. Initially a quantitative research design to predict a relationship between elements of culture (specifically, elements of family, collectivism, and values and beliefs) regarding persistence was employed. However, a survey of the extant literature revealed a limited number of instruments that measure culture. The instruments that were located identified some elements of culture such as collectivism, but none of the scales measured the significant cultural elements of family, or African American values or beliefs (Lutanen & Crocker, 1992; Phinney, 1990; Singelis, Trandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The existing literature on culture found cross-cultural psychology's effort to create scales that meet reliability and validity criteria when applied to different ethnic groups (Hui & Trandis, 1985). By the same token, Khoury (2006) utilized a quantitative research design to test a cultural scale developed by Ho and Chiu (1996). Khoury's study made a concerted effort to offer a multidimensional scale of culture that assesses all elements of culture. However, the reliability and validity of

Khoury's instrument has yet to be proven. In addition, Ho and Chiu's (1996) scale of culture measures Asian American culture, not African-American culture. In short, there are scales that address specific elements of culture such as collectivism; however, there are no universal scales that measure specific elements of African American culture.

Wagner and Yamori (1999) explain that culture cannot serve as an independent variable or a predictor because culture is a part of a person's make up. Wagner and Yamori (1999) further posit that "care must be taken to avoid the fallacy of ethnocentric scales and concepts"..., and that scales about ethnic culture are difficult to quantify or operationalize because "there are no known ethnic culture metrics that are universal" (p. 2). In surveying the literature on culture, there were measures of workplace culture; however, ethnic cultural metrics are distinctly different from workplace metrics on culture. Also, scholarly texts on qualitative and quantitative research design agree that some variables are not quantifiable. Therefore, a qualitative research design provided the best method to explore the nuances of incalculable cultural variables (Creswell, 2013; Kratworhl & Smith, 2005; Padgett, 2008; Rubin & Babbie 2014; Thyer, 2010). Consequently, qualitative research design was chosen rather than quantitative measures for this dissertation.

In weighing the qualitative/quantitative decision, the strengths and weaknesses of both of these research methodologies were considered. First, the greatest strength of qualitative research methodology can be found in its opportunity to gain understanding of the deeper subjective meaning of a phenomenon (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). More specifically, a smaller sample, with flexible procedures and protocols, with open-ended questions, allowed the researcher to address the nuances of culture that cannot be quantified by a quantitative research scale. Moreover, the subjective meaning of culture as

related to persistence varied for each research participant. Consequently, qualitative research methods best addressed the subjective nature of the role of culture in African American male persistence. An additional strength of qualitative research methods is the inexpensive cost of pen and paper, as well as the relatively low cost of a simple recording device to record data. In contrast, the strengths of quantitative research are the weaknesses of qualitative research. For example, the main strengths inherent in quantitative research methods can be found in their standardized measures that hold more reliability and greater generalizability of research findings to larger populations. In addition, the procedures for quantitative research methods are structured and developed in advance, the data are more objective, and it is less time consuming to collect and analyze data. Moreover, the statistics of quantitative analysis provide an assessment of probability and error in inferences about the hypothesis (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Although there are strengths associated with quantitative research design, there are also weaknesses in quantitative research methods. For example, the inflexibility of measures and the lack of personalness of research scales can miss the richness of a research participant's lived experience to explain a phenomenon. Lastly, although there are strengths and weaknesses in both of these research designs, the scholarly texts clearly outline that both qualitative and quantitative research methodology are excellent, and the choice of the best design is dependent on what the research phenomenon calls for.

A phenomenological research method was chosen as the qualitative research design for this study, as it best allowed for the exploration of the role of culture in the lived experience of African American male persistence at the community college. By the same token, the phenomenological approach was a better fit for this study because it is more

oriented to emergent studies (Kratworhl & Smith, 2005). More specifically, there are no known research studies that explore the role of culture as an agent of African American male persistence at the community college. Therefore, this investigation represents emergent phenomenological research of culture and its role in the persistence of African American Males at the Community College. Padgett (2008) confirms that the phenomenological approach allows research participants to share both their lived experience and the conditions of the lived experience. In addition, Creswell (2013) states that phenomenological research method “honor the axiological beliefs and values of the individual...” (p.36). In essence the phenomenological framework honors the lived experience of research participants.

As a final conclusion of the qualitative research method of this study as the best fit for this research phenomenon, Thyer (2010) states that “quantitative measures are a process of assigning numbers to attributes of variables. Moreover, quantitative measures serve the purpose of ensuring uniformity and objectivity in addressing a research phenomenon...” (p.63). Therefore, since culture and African American male persistence cannot be quantified, quantitative research methods could not be utilized for this study. Since there are no scales that measure African American culture, the best option for this dissertation was the completion of phenomenological research study to explore the specifics of culture as related to African American male persistence at the community college.

Participants and Recruitment:

The research setting for this study is a predominantly White urban community college in South Central Pennsylvania with an enrollment of approximately 19,000 student’s. (“Fact Sheet,”2017). The demographics provided illustrate the dynamics

of race, gender, age and persistence of this group in the context of the community college.

A table of relevant student demographics at this community college in Pennsylvania is provided in Table 2 for ease of reference.

Table 2.

Relevant Student Demographics at Community College

<u>Demographics at Pennsylvania Community College</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
African American (male and female combined)	10.5%
Percentage of Males	35.9%
Average age of African American Males	26
Returning Students by Semester	
Spring 2013* ^a	80%
Fall 2012 * ^b	70%

*a latest data available

Source: Fact Sheet, 20 17

*b latest data available

In terms of participants, a convenience, criterion based, sample that evolved to include a snowball sample of thirteen African American males from one campus at a community college. Convenience sampling was utilized, as the researcher is a faculty member at the Lancaster campus, and had access to participants. Criterion based sampling was used as the research called for self- identified African American males, who had completed at least two semesters, and earned at least twelve credits, or were recent graduates from this community college. Snowball sampling, evolved as the researcher sought assistance from faculty members who recruited participants from their discipline. The participants referred by faculty member’s recruited additional participants by word -of -mouth. The initial goal was to recruit twenty research participants from two of the five regional campuses. However, time constraints, which found students on semester break, participant responses to recruitment emails slow, and emerging study deadlines, challenges

gaining access to participants, and limited gatekeeper responses to inquiries for assistance, lead to the final sample size of thirteen participants from the Lancaster campus. It should be noted that although participants were completing courses mostly at this one campus, some participants reported enrollment in courses at various campuses (including virtual campus). More specifically, this community college allows students to seamlessly register for and complete courses at any of the five campuses, plus the virtual campus. In terms of reflexivity about recruitment of participants, the researcher made assumptions that recruitment of participants would be straightforward, based on the fact that the researcher has been teaching at one campus for seventeen years. In addition, the researcher's assumption was that years of knowledge about this community colleges system, would allow for easy navigation within the system and its known barriers. Another assumption made by the researcher, was that relationships with colleagues and administrators would make for an easy recruitment process, however, this was not the case. In addition, it was discovered that although there is an Office of Institutional Research at the community college where this study was conducted, there is no formal IRB process in place with no written or specific protocol for research (including recruitment of research participants). Although written permission to complete this research study was obtained from two administrators, no formal connection to the Office of Institutional Research was involved in gaining permission to complete this study, and consequently permission to recruit research participants. It should be noted that although IRB approval was not obtained, IRB approval for this study was secured at Millersville University where the researcher completed this dissertation. Although recruitment efforts aimed for twenty participants, ultimately the study yielded thirteen participants. Padgett (2008), affirms the sample size of this research

study in that “phenomenological studies aim for depth and a sample size of 6 to 10 participants are common, but the numbers may be somewhat larger if resources permit” (p. 56).

Additional recruitment details include, posting flyers in strategic locations at the Lancaster campus (e.g., hallways where students congregate and socialize) (See Appendix A- Recruitment Flyer). Also, assistance from a gatekeeper in an Office of Student Affairs was sought to encourage students to participate in this research study. Flyers were also mailed to perspective participants by an Office in Student Services. Flyers were emailed to key faculty members in the social science discipline seeking assistance with recruitment. An office in Student Affairs generously advertised in the electronic student newsletter for approximately four weeks. Lastly, a \$10 Subway gift card was provided as an incentive to enhance recruitment and participation in this study. The \$10 gift card was enough to enhance participation, but not too large to influence the outcomes of the study. Padgett (2008) discusses the ethics of incentives and provided an illustration of doctoral students who dispensed “\$10 gift certificates to a coffee shop or grocery store ...” (p. 70). Lastly, the recruitment of final research participants coincided with a deadline to allow for timely data collection, analysis, and reporting of the research study findings.

Data Collection Procedures:

The first step in the data collection process included the completion and submission of Millersville University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol and required documents for approval (see Appendices A, B, C, D). In terms of documents required by the IRB, an interview protocol was used to guide the interview process (See Appendix C- Interview Protocol). Once research participants were identified, the informed consent form

was sent via email with a brief overview of the form, for participant review prior to the interview appointment. The researcher fully explained the informed consent form when participants arrived for the interview appointment. It was at the interview appointment that participants could express understanding of their participation in the research study, and could ask questions before signing the informed consent form. In addition, a demographic sheet was emailed to each participant for completion and submission prior to or, to be completed at the scheduled interview (see Appendix C- Demographic Sheet).

This study utilized semi-structured interviews that were audio taped with a transcription machine that had audio recording ability. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the research participants. Twelve of the thirteen participants selected the researcher's office at the Lancaster campus as a place convenient to conduct the interviews. One participant selected a different campus for the interview, as this location was closer to the participant's place of employment. Engaging in reflexivity, the researcher thought about the dynamics and ethics of interviewing the participants on campus in her office. There was concern about how forthcoming participants would be with information, for fear of what the researcher would think of them, or fear of the researcher disclosing confidential information about experience at the community college (negative experiences). In addition, the researcher questioned if participant responses would be genuine, or would the responses be based on a sort of Hawthorne effect? Creswell (2013), addresses the above raised questions of the "power asymmetry" in which the researcher "rules" the interview (p. 173). The power asymmetry lay in the fact that the researcher is also a faculty member, and the research participants were students, and how did this unequal dynamic of power based on position shape the participant's responses? In addition to concerns about

interviewing participants on campus in the researcher's office, there was also concern that the researcher knew three of the research participants from previous participation in on campus focus groups about men of color. Also, the researcher knew two of the research participants from the community where both the participants and the researcher reside. The researcher discovered that two participants were the brother and nephew (respectively) of a previous student of the researcher who graduated several years earlier. The researcher, was transparent about these concerns in discussion with research participants at the onset of the interview during the explanation of the informed consent. In addition, the researcher utilized professional social work practice knowledge, and knowledge of the National Association of Social Workers, Code of Ethics to guide the interactions with research participants during the interviews (NASW Code of Ethics, 2018). Peer debriefing was used to process and come to terms with these dynamics. Lastly, reflexivity and positionality were utilized in effort to minimize researcher bias.

After the interviews were completed the contents of the interview were transcribed relatively quickly utilizing a basic transcription machine. The researcher made effort to schedule the interviews in a way that would allow time for transcription, and consequent coding of the interviews immediately. However, because the interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the research participants, some days yielded two interviews, and consequently limited the amount of time to transcribe and code immediately following the interviews. In addition, some interviews were closer to ninety minutes in length, while some interview were 35-45 minutes in length consequently, the longer interviews required more time to transcribe, and this process also created a slower transcription rate.

After the interviews were transcribed, the recorded audio were destroyed, and the completed demographic sheets, and memos remained in the researcher's home office (with locked door) to safeguard the confidentiality of participant data. In short, the documents were held in confidence and will be disposed of after three years in accordance with the policies and procedures of Millersville University's IRB office.

Data Analysis:

To support effective data analysis, an independent study in qualitative research was completed with a faculty member, with professional knowledge and expertise in qualitative research. The independent study provided a deeper knowledge and understanding of the applications of qualitative research. In addition, scholarly literature was consulted to further understand and apply qualitative research methods including data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2011; Padgett, 2008; Peters & Wester, 2006; Tracy, 2010).

The analysis of data began with the transcription of the raw data, and during this process an organic and intuitive preliminary data coding and analysis process begins to emerge. Consequently, once the coding and analysis process began the data was in many instances embedded within the researcher's mind. This embedding, allowed for ease of location of participants comments, and overall familiar relationship with the data. In addition, during the transcription process, the researcher was able to sense the richness of the participant's stories, as parts of the interviews were replayed to capture words or phrases spoken by the research participants. Notably, transcription of the interviews also provided a place for memoing and reflexivity about the research participants, their stories. More specifically, the researcher contemplated positionality as an African-American

woman who is aware of her African, and African American cultural roots, being raised in traditional Christian practices, completing doctoral research on culture, African American males and persistence at the community college, and at the community college where the research took place. Finally, transcription allowed time to memo and reflect on the scholarly literature and its theoretical assumptions as related to the research phenomenon. Although the transcription process was arduous it was at the same time a rewarding and gratifying experience.

After the data was transcribed, the transcripts were read in their entirety to verify the data content and to get a further sense of the data. In reading the transcribed data, memoing was utilized to as a part of preparation for the coding process, and consequent data analysis process. Padgett (2008) describes memo writing or memoing as a way to “explain the basis for definitional statements, record ideas and hunches about what is going on in the data, and as placeholders for logistical or other concerns” (p. 155). In essence, memoing was used as a method of preliminary sense making of the ideas as they began to emerge from reading the transcripts. In addition, Nvivo’s memo function was used, as well as handwritten notes to keep track of the various data sources. In essence, memoing was used to organize and track transcribed data for coding and data analysis.

In terms of coding, initially an inductive approach of open, line-by-line coding was utilized. Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) describe how the inductive method allows the codes to emerge from the data, and to support constant comparative analysis throughout the research study. In addition, focused coding was used as a next step in the coding process to winnow down the number of codes. In addition, selective coding was used to “refine core categories in relationship to each other” (Padgett, 2008, p.158). More specifically, the

focused coding process entailed reviewing codes, then grouping the codes into categories, from highest to lowest number of sources and references. The categories were then absorbed into large groups, with subcodes. The final coding process yielded major themes. Padgett (2008) appropriately describes these coding approach's as a "constant comparative analysis of looking for patterns ultimately identifying themes or patterns that arch across large swaths of data" (p. 155). In essence, this approach to coding allowed for the conduction of a systematic search for themes and subthemes in the data. In addition, this approach to coding allowed for the interpretation of data, and consequent findings, in a timely fashion. In addition to the aforementioned methods of coding, *Nvivo*, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to organize the data for systematic data analysis by the researcher. In addition to utilizing *Nvivo*, the codes of the interviews were printed, and further coded, noting subcodes, and to confirm that there were no additional codes to be developed. Padgett, (2008) states that "saturation is invoked at various stages of qualitative analysis to refer to the point at which no additional data collection is needed, no new codes are developed, and themes and subthemes have been fully fleshed out" (p. 171). The saturation point was reached by interview number eleven, as there were no new codes that arose from interviews twelve and thirteen. However, the researcher transcribed and coded these interviews anyway as the research participants represented a unique father and son dynamic relevant to the research phenomenon.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

With regard to rigor and validation, the peer review and debriefing, reflexivity and positionality to clarify researcher bias, auditing, and member checking were utilized to maximize rigor and trustworthiness in this study (Creswell, 2013; Padgett, 2008; Tracy,

2010). Padgett (2008) describes the benefits of “Peer Debriefing and Support” (PDS) as “rigor-enhancing” and as “a place to get and give feedback, or to debrief and de-stress from fieldwork and data analysis” (p.189). Creswell (2013), adds that PDS provides an “external check of the research process,” and a space where the peer debriefer can play “devil’s advocate to keep the researcher honest, asking the hard questions about methods, meanings and interpretations” (p.251). In addition, reflexivity will be employed at the onset of the study with the researcher providing details about positionality (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013), posits that the benefit of reflexivity in qualitative research is that “researchers do not have to try and play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrative claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge” (p. 214). Tracy (2010) identifies and discusses reflexivity as one of the eight “Big Tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. In essence, reflexivity allows the researcher to expose bias outright and not pretend that bias do not exist. The researcher in this study provided a positionality statement at the beginning of this study, and also disclosed positionality as a reflexive process throughout this study.

An additional approach to trustworthiness that was exercised in this study was auditing. Padgett (2008) considers leaving documents for an audit as a means of “adopting a spirit of openness and documenting each step taken in data collection and analysis” (p.191). Padgett (2008) further summarizes that when an audit of documents such as “raw data, as well as memos, noting decisions made during data collection, coding, and analysis” are made available, rigor is enhanced because auditing provides documentation that ... the other strategies of peer support... and have used appropriately” (p. 191). In short, auditing provides a checks and balance of the research contents and data analysis. The researcher

maintained field notes and memos available for review, and will dispose of such notes and memos according to the IRB office at Millersville University. Another strategy for rigor utilized was member checking, Padgett (2008) describes member checking as checking with research participants about the contents of the transcript, as the contents of the interview. Member checking was accomplished in this research study by emailing each participant and asking each to review the transcript contents, and provide feedback to the researcher about the contents of the transcripts. Eight of thirteen participants responded to emails from the researcher with brief statements of approval. It seemed as if some of the participant's rubber stamped their approval of the transcript contents, however it was apparent that at least one participant reviewed the transcript in detail based on the details in this participant's feedback. Padgett, (2008) encourages memo checking as an ethical practice, as well as a tool for increasing rigor.

In conclusion, qualitative research design was the best fit to explore culture as an agent of African American male persistence at the community college. A phenomenological design permitted the research participants to share their lived experience of culture and persistence as African American males at a community college. Finally, steps to maximize rigor, and to increase trustworthiness were integrated into this research study process. The next section of this research study will provide data analysis and results

Chapter 4 Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the role of culture in African American male persistence at a community college. This study sought to understand the following research questions:

1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?
2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?

This chapter will provide a brief overview of study participants demographic information, including pseudonym (initials) and identification number, race/ethnicity, age, past and present family structure, relationship status [at the time of the study], self-reported social economic status, academic major, enrollment status [at the time of the study], and class level. In addition, this chapter will provide a detailed summary of relevant research findings, which includes four conceptually distinct themes with quotations from research participants. Each research question is answered in its own section using the themes that emerged from the data. With regard to reflexivity, every effort was made to allow the voices of the participants to be clearly represented.

Participant Demographics

Ten of the thirteen participants in this research study were currently enrolled at the community during the time of the study, and three of the participants recently graduated from this community college. In addition, the participants represent diversity in background with regard to age, ethnicity/race and major. The median age of participants was 31, with a group age range of 19-57 years of age. The ethnicity/race background of

participants included five participants who self-identified as “black,” and eight participants who self-identified as “mixed- race” or “other.” Additional demographic information includes two international students from Jamaica and Belize. Also one participant in this study is from Alaska, and self-identified as “black,” and Polynesian. With regard to past household configurations, six of the thirteen research participants grew up in two parent households. Their current household configurations indicated that six of thirteen participants remain in two parent households. Seven of thirteen participants were raised by single mothers and the configurations of these households are different today. More specifically, two of the research participants are married and three participants are parents, one raising children as a single parent and two raising children with their spouses. As a point of interest, one of the research participants is raising his adolescent son as a single parent, and both the father and son participated in this study. The participant’s demographics are summarized in Table 3 for ease of reference.

Table 3.

<i>Participant Demographics</i>			
	f (%)	M	SD
Age	13	29	11.97
Race/Ethnicity			
“Black”	4 (30.77%)		
“Black/Mixed/Other”	9 (69.23%)		
Enrollment			
	<i>f (%)</i>		
Graduate	3 (23.07)		
Full-time	4 (30.77%)		
Part-time	6 (46.15%)		
Enrollment Class Level			
	<i>f (%)</i>		
60+ Credits	3 (23.07)		
Senior 50 +Credits	2 (15.38)		
Junior	3 (23.07)		
Sophomore	1 (7.69%)		
Freshman	3 (23.07%)		
Transfer	1(7.69%)		

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Findings

The data collected from semi-structured interviews were analyzed and synthesized into four overarching themes that sought to answer two research questions. Addressing the first research question, the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence at the community college are identified by two overarching themes of “Internal Motivations,” and “External Factors.” The subthemes associated with the theme Internal Motivations” that emerged include “Self-Motivation/ Self Determination,” “Desire to Succeed,” “Faith and Religion.” The subthemes associated with the theme External Factors include “Family,” “School Experience,” “Motivated to Succeed for Others, External Rewards,” and “Support.” Although the subtheme of Self-Motivation/Self Determination, “Desire to Succeed” is not situated in the micro environment, this subtheme emerged solidly in this study, therefore is being identified as character traits that aids in African American male persistence. The above outlined themes and subthemes are situated in the participant’s micro and mezzo environment. The second research question, the micro, mezzo, and macro factors that negatively impact African American male persistence are identified by two overarching themes, “Internal Barriers” and “External Barriers.” The subthemes of “Self-Isolation,” “Lack of Motivation,” Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt” and “Self-Blame,” emerged as Internal Barriers. While “Early Childhood Experiences-Poverty, Family, Educational Experiences,” and “Green Card Status” are associated with “External Barriers.” Although the subthemes of Self-Isolation,” “Lack of Motivation,” Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt” and “Self-Blame,” are not situated in the micro environment however, these subthemes emerged as solid factors that impacted the African American males in this study, therefore are identified as character traits that

negatively impact African American male persistence. Additionally, the identified themes and subthemes that negatively impact the participant’s persistence are situated in the participant’s micro, mezzo and macro environment. The research questions and overall findings are summarized in Table 4 for ease of reference.

Table 4.

Overview of Findings

Research Questions	Findings
<p>Q1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?</p>	<p>Internal Motivations This theme is defined as the mental, psychological or emotional reason or reasons for the participant’s persistence. The subthemes include *Self-Motivation/ Self Determination (Desire to Succeed), Faith and Religion. The theme, and subthemes are situated in the participant’s mezzo environment.</p> <p>External Factors This category is defined as the outward or exterior reason or reasons for the participant’s persistence. The subthemes include Family, School Experience, Motivated to Succeed for Others, External Rewards, and Support. The theme and subthemes are situated in the participant’s micro, mezzo and macro environment.</p>
<p>Q2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?</p>	<p>Internal Barriers – This theme is defined as the mental, psychological or emotional reason or reasons that negatively impact the participant’s persistence. The subthemes include *Self-Isolation, *Lack of motivation and Lack of Focus, *Self-Doubt and *Self-Blame.</p> <p>External Barriers- This theme is defined as the outward or exterior reason or reasons that negatively impact the participant’s persistence. The subthemes include “Early Childhood Experiences-Poverty, Family, Education Experience,” and “Green Card Status.” The theme and subthemes are situated in the participant’s micro, mezzo and macro environment.</p>

**Individual Traits not Micro, Mezzo or Macro Environment*

Q1. What Micro, Mezzo and Macro Cultural Factors Lead to African American Male Persistence

The first research question sought to determine what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to the persistence of African American males at a community college. The two overall themes are “Internal Motivations,” and “External Factors.” This section specially identifies and defines the subthemes that lead to persistence including “Self-Motivation/ Self Determination,” “Desire to Succeed,” “Faith and Religion,” (Internal Motivations), and “Family,” “School Experience,” “Motivated to Succeed for Others, External Rewards,” and “Support” (External Factors). Although the subtheme of Self-Motivation/Self Determination, “Desire to Succeed” is not situated in the micro environment, this subtheme emerged solidly in this study, therefore is being identified as character traits that aids in African American male persistence.

Self-determination/Self-motivation

Nine (70%) of the participants described self-determination/self-motivation with regard to persistence. Self-determination is a common social work term that describes a client’s right to make their own choices and decisions (NASW, Code of Ethics, 2018). Self-determination/Self-Motivation is also described as the determination by oneself to do what needs to be done (Dictionary.com, “Self-Motivation,” 2018). Participants describe self – determination/self-motivation as participant’s doing what needs to be done for persistence. The subtheme of Self Determination/Self-Motivation is considered a personality trait, however participants describe it as important in persistence, therefore self-determination/self-motivation is included in this study.

For example, TW#10 demonstrates Self Determination/Self-Motivation in actions taken to do what needed to be done to get off welfare.

TW#10: Usually, it's a variety...but sometimes when I'm... ah...like now... I've been eating rice... for the past few days... I really haven't been going out shopping or anything like that....
Buying all this food... because... I... ah... got off welfare.....I didn't want to be on welfare no more.... Even though I knew I would have more food....but I'm like... no... I don't want... I was like... I'm better than this.....so... I got off welfare... I been off it for a little while.... So all I do now... is I buy shorter amounts of food and I make it last... throughout the whole week... I came to that... because..... I know I'm better than that.... And I don't wanna... make it seem like..... I can't take care of myself.... I gotta rely on people to give me all this.... NO! I 'm better than that.....I want to succeed in life.... In order to succeed in life, sometimes you gotta leave somein' behind.... Even though it looks like its gonna be the thing that help you.....no it's not gonna help me....by me leavin' it alone and movin' on...

EC#8 describes Self –Determination/Self-Motivation as putting in “energy and efforts” for success.

EC#8: And so.... You know if everything is....if all the factors are there for success.....all I think I need is to put in my energy..... and that's what I am going to do.....

WT#5 describes Self Determination/Self-Motivation in initiating asking for help completing a college application [first college application to Community College of Philadelphia]. WT#5 also describes how he struggled in Radiologic technology major and initiated asking for help from an academic advisor.

WT#5.....And there was another gentleman from another house, who was actually helping people do applications for college. So here its like word of mouth, I heard what he said, and I said “yo,” can you help me do an application too?.....
...so I did that, we went through the process, um... I ended up getting into Community College of Philadelphia. So that was my first opportunity to actually change my life.....
..so the bottom line is that is how I ended up getting into um., Social Work. I said, instead of me messing this up, I talked to um... I had another lady in

Harrisburg that I was going to see. And um.. I asked her.. if it would be ok, if I changed it...because this is what I really wanted to do.... And that this is the direction where, the direction that I should be going in...

Desire (To Succeed) For Something More

Desire is defined as “a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen” (Dictionary .com, “Desire,” 2018). Several participants described a desire to persist in life and education.

GB# 13 describes the desire to do more than work a “9-to-5” job, to “just make money, work and get another woman.” He describes a desire to for life fulfillment through higher education.

GB#13: but to go back to um...how I got here....um...it was a long time coming... something way in the back of my mind...wherever that is[chuckle]...not in the visual cortex...but somewhere in there...it was saying you could of did better... You could of did better in school...you know you can do that...you can do that...and so...I said let me try different in my life...instead of just... going back out into the world...working...you know.... Hard core 9-to-5...or... 6-to-12 or whatever....1st shift, 2nd shift, 1st shift...try to do something different...you know...try to surround yourself with different people...get a different perspective of the world.... And um... for me it was just about taking a step out of the box...of the norm...ok I'm going to get me another job...get me another woman...and just continue the cycle...woman, job, money, weekends, woman, job, money, weekends...and I said I want to do something different... I want to....it's about a fulfillment of your life....and, and what were you put here to do?...and are using the best of your life...the short period of time....and I knew that I could do more...then what I was doing...you know...I was just looking for a new journey... a new chapter in my life... and uh... and once I got here... This institution of higher learning...everything just started to come to me....you know...

JJ#4 describes a desire for a positive life.

...and like just for me... I wanna... I wanna do something positive with my life.... to do something positive...just seeing it being done...knowing it can be done.... If I put my mind to it.. um...

WT#5 continues his discussion of self-determination to include a description of desire.

WT#5...and there was another gentleman from another house, who was actually helping people do applications for college. So here its like word of mouth, I heard what he said, and I said “yo,” can you help me do an application too?...so I did that, we went through the process, um... I ended up getting into Community College of Philadelphia. So that was my first opportunity to actually change my life. I had a desire.... It took that desire. Right. That first desire was to make a change and do something different. So that’s where I started my footwork...I wanted to go to school and I wanted to change my life, and I wanted to do right,...

EC#8 considers his desire or “eagerness” to come to the United States for educational opportunities.

EC#8: ummmm.....I think the quest or eagerness for knowledge.... Particularly for the legal nature....like I said I did paralegal in Belize.... But two things about it.... It was so long ago.... It was 15 years ago, 16 years ago.....and it was that..... it was not as in depth.....it was only a certificate program... that the institution for those in the legal field or those in the magistrate Court..... to sign on... you know.... For career development.... You are basically bringing us a notch above.....so I enjoyed the opportunity..... but that having been done so long ago.... I had not been in a formal educational setting since then.... So I am looking forward to coming toXXX... I would say a definite growing in knowledge keeps me going in the micro

Faith and Religion

Religion is defined as “strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof” (Dictionary.com, “Faith,” 2018). Five (50%) of participants expressed strong belief in God, and the doctrines of the Christian faith.

TW#10 Recounts how God got him to XXXX, helps him communicate with people. In addition, he identifies Bible References.

TW#10: I got to XXXX by enrolling and...it wasn’t ah.... an easy situation because at the time I was poor.... I was homeless.... But... I had to motivate myself to say....I can do better than this... and that’s how I enrolled, and the

Lord made a way for me to be at the Lodge.... which is across the street from XXXX.... Because I was in college before but I didn't finish... well...by my faith... I believe.... Being content in what state you're in... like...I had to be content in those states that I was in..... and there was no way I could change it.... Only God could change it....and all I had to do was keep my faith....and keep going on even though... things didn't look the way.... umm... the way I wanted to look... I just... I still had to show God.... I still trust you.....even though everything is not the way I want it to be.... And by me doing that.... it's made me stronger.... Its made me wiser... Its made.... More patient....and more long suffering...to be able to go through.... life.....knowing how to respond..... how to communicate with different people.....at different levels.... Through God.....because.... I don't know what I'm doing by myself.... Only with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and God.... I know what to say.... I know what to do.....I know..... where God wants me to be at.... or does he want me to be at.....and..... I always put Him first.... And that's how I keep up.... with it... No.... I want to be able to move on to another step with God on my side... Yes I did....and I took it seriously.... 'cause when I looked at my life.... I looked at where I did... I want to go..... if I like pass away young....I want to go to heaven.... I don't want to go to hell.....and I experienced different trials and tribulations that actually helped me... as a young person to know that there is a God.....that even though things don't go my way all the time... God is still God..... and he keeps his promise.... Because he don't lie.....Though things start off at a bad start.... Doesn't mean its going to end that way.... Because some things you gotta go through....in order to make that next step.... Because you just can't do it without God.... Because without God all things are impossible..... but with God....it's possible... you just gotta believe... have the faith.....so that you can go on in life..... so God can be there... when this happens, when that happens....Because he knows the beginning to the end..... He knows what your gonna ask.... before you ask.....He's all knowing.... And He's powerful..... and he is a God to be feared..... and I fear God.....

WT #5 chronicles being “led by God,” and God “providing for him.” WT#5, also identifies Bible references, and describes incidents where he wanted to get high and asked God to help him.

WT#5: and so I was moving things... 'cause I, you know... I have to say this.. we struggle with two sides of us... you know... and um... that goes with the scripture, Romans 7:14-24; and the struggle with sin... that which I don't do...that which I should do..... I don't do.... when it is... when I want to do right evil is right there present with me....in my mind [emphasis] I serve the law of God but my flesh the law of sin... so I struggle between two goods.... I want to do. Good and evil.. I wanted to go to school and I wanted to change my

life, and I wanted to do right, 'cause I grew up, raised up in a Christian family home... but my disease had overwhelmed me, and it started changing my ideas and behaviors, and I wanted to do school, but I was still fighting my disease, because now I was gettin' ready to get all this money.... and.. and ah, the first thing to happen when I got money....I... had to deal with when I... started getting this money and things really started changing, and it really.. and the thing about this [emphasis] part of my life, that you can want something, and God and His unlimited grace, will open the door immediately, he don't say, come back and see me, I'll think about it.. as soon as you say Lord can you do this.. doors start opening.. and I knew [emphasis] right then[emphasis] that He was in my life. So I was calling on him...that I think God was leading me in this direction, I think God was leading me in this direction...How I challenged myself to open this door, so because of my faith, because what I believed in, what I stood for.... Christ, he said he would help me with... open doors no man can close, and close doors no man can open... and I didn't allow my past to hinder my growth.. so I know, each step, each way, each step that I was taking, was a challenge, like it was a test, and every time the test came, I'd call on God.. Lord, please help me with this because I really don't know, and then something said.. the truth will set you free....And that's what I talk about Roman's... I tell 'em read Roman's 7:14-24, the struggle with sin.... That's the one.. that which I don't do, I do, that which I should do, I DON'T do! When I want to do good, evil right there present with me! O what a wretched man I am, O who will save me! In my mind, I serve the law of God..... but my flesh the law of sin... it's a continual battle, 'cause we need to put the flesh... what?... under submission... you have to! If you don't have self-control, then your out of control... and that's the foundation right there...

um.um.um.um.... Yeah, yes!I'm just messing up, and he kept trying to tell me, you know your done, just don't do it.. then something came up in me.. you ever see the Grinch stole Christmas? All of sudden something came over my heart man... I was crying... I said God..I said Lord... I said.. I really... you gotta help me... get out of this feeling I'm having... 'cause I know my life is changed, I claim victory in Jesus name! I claim victory in Jesus name! and that's when I said Melinda, I'm a keep going... 'cause I remember Karen telling me you can get a job in a nursing home or something... that ain't what I want to do though.. I want to give this back... I gotta share this... I gotta give it back.. and I need people to know... that these things will happen to you... and I am here to be a honest to God truth of a witness, that these things happen, even when you get in the middle of something good, something bad can come, and something can change your direction in a split second. That's why you gotta allow those thoughts to become a passing thought, 'cause if you stop 'em, and it turn into a movie, what they do... guess who the main character is?...Divine intervention! God had seen.. 'cause it's not against flesh and blood... its against principalities... spiritual wickedness in high places. The spirit war against the flesh...and that flesh... you gotta, put the flesh under submission.. and that flesh... that desire... almost overwhelmed me, but God is greater then all that. In this flesh... I can now in my mind, I'll tell you I serve

the law of God now., I don't let the flesh take control of me.. 'cause you got to, you got to... this is a daily battle! I wake up in the morning....So you got summin' to give away... he said its just real man, and when I share, I share.. see this the part that's important... I don't share from my mind, I share from my heart... 'cause you can feel [tears, crying].... It's so good... it's so good...it's so good... man I'm telling you man, I'm telling you man, I have a good life... it's so good.. and I can't stop saying thank you..

RC# 6 outlines how he prayed to God about his enrollment at XXXX and identifies faith as important to him.

RC# 6....So the same day... it was accepted...yeah... we prayed... we prayed... and then she called and said RC is accepted... we will be sending the information so he can go to the Embassy to get his Visa too... yes... my faith... yeah I would say definitely....

EJ#9 reports his experience of being raised in the Christian faith, and his belief that "God has a plan, and that something good will come out of this."

EJ#9: I mean.... like.... in terms of like... faith and spirituality..... and all that.....like...ah... it's weird...I was raised a Christian right..... I was raised a Baptist my whole life.... I was baptized as a kid.....but then like.... I 'm a curious person....so like.... there were like some things that just didn't add up.... But some of the things that made a lot of sense..... so... in terms of like that.... I believe that there is some.... a Higher Being..... there's Someone... Something.....I don't know..... it could be anything for all we know...however, at the same time.... I think.....uh... there like... Its more than one.... and then.... I think..... they all affect our lives very differently.... So like... the knowledge of all that I kinda pieced together.....like myself kinda thing....umm...the way it reflects on my school.... it's like.... I have a respect for everything.....like... ever subject in school to me like...matters... and I hold some sort of power in everyone's life.....so... like.... I try to branch out.....and reach out to as many areas as I can...just because it's easier for me.... 'cause I feel like if you can understand everything...Then you'll have a successful like....'cause success is not just about money..... it's like... To me its about knowledge.... about how much knowledge someone has.....and rather or not they can understand it and use it...That's something that's really important to me.... and my culture....and God has a plan....like....like....like..... there's always a plan.... So I feel like....as long as I'm patient..... I stay in line... I wait for my time.....you know.....something goods gonna come out of all this...

SC#3 outlines his upbringing in the church and the role of Jesus Christ in his life.

SC#3: Community, church, neighborhood, I think, I am a good ol' Christian church boy, I been going to that church since I was two weeks old, I was, I still go about 3 x's per week, cause I participate in small groups, I'm now a drummer in the worship band, I teach uh middle school every forth Sunday,.... After Sunday school I'll do the graphic design and set up the posters and everything... for our church, so I am very well endowed with the church. So when I am not anything school related, its pretty much church or work related. So I have a lot of people at my church that are my age that are also in very extraneous subjects and fields, like I have a friend that also going into the neuroscience field. So we always quiz each other, we always play around, talk about the nervous system, the peripheral nervous system. So its only a competition, of who can best help who... which is awesome..... um... I would like to say that I would not be here without my faith in Jesus Christ.....

Family

Nine (70%) of participants described how their father, step-father, mother, or grandmother, were instrumental in their enrollment at XXXX, instilling values or providing nurturance and guidance during the participant's early years.

DW#2 States his family told him he should go to college

DW#2:... uh, my family always told me I should go to college or that I would go to college...

Three participant's identity how their father and step-father are significant to them.

TD#11 was raised by a single mom, and discusses his step-father's influence in his life.

TD#11: He never coached me.....he never coached me.....he put me in a position that made me.....he just.....he just influenced me he didn't tell me.....by the way he lived.... And I thought.....that..... that is what men....boys.....should do.....

SC#3 Outlines how his dad moved he and his family from an urban city to the suburbs, so he could have a better life.

SC#3 My father is currently, he's still a police officer down in Baltimore City. He's not in the streets anymore, has a Captain, so he's in the headquarters, working with a bunch of Colonels, and Commissioners up in the ranks, he's on TV doing news broadcasting and stuff, its awesome to see my dad on there... that's because he's spent almost thirty years in the force, working his way up there to get me out of that area. So it's a huge drive for me to think that they got out of that triangle, that circle, of just madness and chaos, and everything else you can imagine down in Baltimore City, to get me somewhere safe so I can be free and be better.

LE#7 describes his dad as an "influence on him."

LE#7: No, no, he's a State Trooper....He's a State Trooper for 25 years.... And he's retired now he works at Costco's...um... but... he makes... he has a good pension... he makes good money... so that's fine... Yeah... I'd just say that.... my dad's probably an influence on how I try to work you know.....He tries to be positive...

JB#12, and GB #13 are son and father respectively in this study. JB#12 resides in the household with GB#13. JB#12 specifies how his dad is a positive influence on him. GB #13 describes how the household is run for both he and JB#12.

JB#12: Kinda like where the placement was at..... I was actually for some reason was going to go to Thaddeus...and um... because I went to XXXX...because my Dad went to XXXX... when I was making a decision... I knew most of the information...because they gave me the information.... and they told me you know...about the school...but you know..... he would come home and tell me all this stuff about XXXX...and I was kinda..... you know..... drawn to that.....being more familiar...so..... I just decided to go to XXXX..... so pretty much my dad.....all and all.... We don't really talk about it everyday..... but um...I do kinda look at it like.....dang...you go to the same school...it's kinda funny...I don't know...it just seems a little funny some times that we go to the same school...but we don't talk about it too much...

GB#13: For me it's like....obviously I'm like his parent....so....I look at this in a different way...he's going the day-to-day journey... I'm looking at it in a larger perspective...and even when where here together....people are like...that's your son...you know...its ah.... I mean...we kinda give one another our space...and you know.....since it's pretty much him and I...and my youngest son...on the weekends...you know...our house doesn't probably look like the typical family household...I got like all kind of school stufflaying all around... and he has his own... I call it his apartment....he has an apartment upstairs and to the

right...way back there...he has his own apartment... I mean...I get on him...I'm not gonna sit here and lie... I do...because... I want him to succeed in something...you know...is it still running [I get up to check to see that the tape is still running]...I want him to succeed... I don't want him to fail... you know...so ...when I see something... that I think might be detrimental to his future... I bring it up...I don't...I don't ...you know...look the other way.....I'm not afraid to continue to parent him.....and I have to remember that he is.....grown...he's not 12 years old...but.....at the same time... I'm compelled to... If I see something that I need to discuss with him... not only with school.....but in his own private life.....I will ah..... I'll bring it up.... I know he's probably like [looking at JB, with a chuckle].....but that's just the way it is...but for the most part...you know we... We have the same personality...kinda like laid back...so... he's like a roommate in some ways...if you can say that... 'cause we don't get in one another's business...we respect one another's space.....things like that.....but at the same time.....if I have to say something to him about his schooling I will.....and I wish I didn't have to sometimes.....but.....[laugh]

JB#12: ah...difficult...not like difficult in that kind of sense...I kinda.... find it ah...not annoying....kinda like... no like... I listen.. and... I just think to myself... on what I 'm gonna do get better.... I just... that's something I gotta work for myself...um....sometimes I think....like...get it done and you won't have to hear it no more...I just...it's something I still gotta work on...for myself...the more he talks to me...the more I want to do the work...so he can stop talking....[laughter] but...you know...I don't wanna say it will never happen.... but I'm still struggling with... I guess you can say maturity...for me to... I don't know... I can't explain it...

GB#13: but I want him to be better me...I know all...well I don't know about all parents...but I know for myself... I want him to be better than me!..I want to break chains... I want to create another....I want him to be better than me!.....I don't know how else to say it... you know... at Pizza Hut...Not for the same building but for the same company with the same Supervisor... and now were going to the same college together....[laughter]

[K: So your kinda following your dad's.....maybe footsteps....but maybe unintentionally?..... Maybe you don't even think about it.....]

JB#12: no I just kinda fell into place...its kinda weird...following...

GB#13: Yeah it is 'cause I never told him to do all these things.... He went to Burrowes, 'cause that just happened to be where I lived.....I mean.....then he.....ah..... went to McCaskey..... Because he was living with me at the time.... that was the school district I was in...

JB#12: I mean yeah....for sure.... I mean something's he talks about and

they end up happening and its like wow! So I kinda like already get that....get the gist of all that...and looking back, I probably appreciate it more...

GB#13: Appreciation...because you know what that's a good word...because you know what...because he does know...he surprises me sometimes.....we sit and have long conversations...he's there...it's like my counselors and teachers and advisors.....we just gotta get in there...you know... Its there...I know he's a smart person.... you know...underneath it all... even on top of it, you know....to appreciate someone in your life... you know... that's...[silence]... trying to bestow upon you... you know... some sense knowledge... I know that he knows... I can have a conversation with him.... I can get kinda deep sometimes... even my youngest son...I do it with Victor too.... and he's like... wow dad that was pretty deep.... sometimes I go a little bit to far I think... I travel down the rabbit hole big time... but ah... I know he knows... but what I heard him say was....at some point...maybe he'll appreciate it more... You know....and I had to go through the same thing... uh... My father never taught me pretty much anything.....so I thought...We never really had a deep conversation... you know...the things that I do with him... it was never.... this was not..... he came home he had this mean look on his face all the time... you know... He was in the house... growing up...I'll a be honest with you... I just wish he wasn't in the house... cause I mean the whole house changed... he wasn't like abusive... he didn't scream holler or curse... I think my dad.... I never heard him use the "F" word... you know...he said, damn it or shit every once in a while... or something like that maybe...he was just a...firm... he was born in 1921... ok...and so.... he.... he just wasn't...you know... very communicative... with me....and he didn't have that either... I mean... he was a lumber jack and a truck driver...at the age of 13... you know..... his father was actually murdered...by his mother...so I mean... his life was way different than mine...and his step father... who he's actually named after [gestures to JB] ...was extremely [emphasis] stern on him....you know...I remember hearing stories...he was a black man in South Carolina....and uh.....White men feared him....back in... you know...were talking ...Jim Crow Era... in the 1940's and 30's...J. B.....so... but....going back....um....my... ah... I didn't think that he ever taught me anything.....but then I was in the Marine Corp one day.....and I was like I don't have a dad... whatever...and someone said of course you have a dad...'cause your here...yeah... I kinda grew up thinking... you know.... I never really had a dad... 'cause it wasn't like.... your uh...you know... Rockwell portrait of a father.... you know what I mean?.....and I never had that..... but.... he taught me how to be a better man... but it was....it wasn't.... what I am sure he intended to do...but... I learned anyway....so... I do different...then what he did... I'm completely opposite...not to say better... just different....Exactly...I learned something very valuable from him...and you know...unfortunately he passed away... he passed away in my arms....in fact... you know... the last think he

heard out... of any human beings mouth was...I love your dad...and that was from my mouth to his ears... you know...and ah... you know... I got over it... I, I... learned that everyone is not the same... but this is the way I'm gonna do it...not to say it's better...because it can't be better... because it's a product of what I was raised from...so it's not better... it's just and extension...and so...hopefully...the extension will do something here..
[gesturing to JB]
...I guess there's some genetics....and then there's.... you know... an atmosphere...

WT#5 Recounts living with his dad to overcome his addiction, and how his dad was an influence on him.

WT#5....so my mom said you need to help your son.... so my dad comes home from Jersey... so in my mind, I'm going to get some money from him. I was gonna tell him I'm gonna get a couple dollars. But it didn't go that way. When mom said what she said. He looked at me...and I was like... I just need to get away... I didn't get to the money part yet... He said get your stuff.. yeah get your stuff... yeah lets go..they work in packing and shipping!! I go working in the grinding room.. making cadell making dog food... with these big ol' barrels, he had dancing around the floor put that barrel over there... you gotta roll it... and this stuff.... O my God... so this my dad... so things are going along....I'm living with my dad, and he lived right there at fairy station apartment... there's a stop on the speed line there... there's apartment there, nice apartment... I wake up, that man already got his cloths on talk about lets go... you going to work... he had to be there at 5 o'clock in the morning.. he'd throw me all off...so I was living with my dad... and we were driving together, and he'd work every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday... Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday off... I didn't need no job like that... every weekend off... but I didn't do anything in the beginning... 'cause the only thing I require from you is that you go to church... 'cause my dad been in church for over 50 years.... Highly religious... he goes to church out there in New Jersey.. they got their own bus...

Several Participants reported how their Mother was instrumental in their enrollment at this community college, and/or indicated that their Mother was a strong person for raising the participants as a single mom.

RC#6: reports that his mom (a White Christian missionary to Jamaica), raised him, and taught him about a religious practice of “planting seeds.” In addition, he describes how his mom was instrumental in his enrolling at this community college.

RC#6...um... so my, mom... um I call her mom, because they really raised me in Jamaica. They were missionaries to Jamaica. They were running a boy's home, they raised about 500 boys. Street boys... boys that were having problems at home. I was one of those boys... So the same day... it was accepted... yeah... we prayed... we prayed... and then she called and said RC is accepted... we will be sending the information so he can go to the Embassy to get his Visa too... Well um..... in Jamaica I go to um... Family Church on the Rock.... Um... my pastors... my pastors.... I'm really close to my pastors.... Umm... a big support... they gave me my first \$500 toward my school.... yeah.. and... before I.. I planted a seed... because... before I left... I was getting ready to leave... but my pastor was struggling with cancer, which was just like... so I said ok... I have like \$1,200 started like, and my mom was like you need to plant a seed that God is going to bless you. It's up to you... I'm not telling you what amount to plant.... so I was just like ok. \$600.... so back to your question... my mom was doing was doing research college for 3rd world nation..... Students, and XXXX came up first.

K: Your mom was doing research, trying to find a school for you?

RC: Or college, because she was like.... Ummm... do you.... I know your family didn't go to college, I know your family didn't go to college... do you see yourself going to college.... yes... my faith... yeah I would say definitely, because my mom had this saying, she had two sayings.... “it is what it is....” And “if you start something you need to complete it... yeah, she's my motivator... like... anything.... Like she's like just there for me.... like... make your decision.... Were with you 100%.... so like that....

DW#2 stated that his mom recommended XXXX to him.

DW#2: Uh, my mother recommended it to me, she said she heard it from a friend, and that it would be good to do two years here and two years somewhere else

[Karen: So but your mom suggested that you start at a 2-year school, and that you start of XXXX and then transfer, are you planning to transfer?]

DW #2: Yes, to XXXX

LE#7 Explains how his mom was pivotal in his enrollment in XXXX, and how she helps

him manage his medication for ADHD.

LE#7 I didn't know what I wanted to do after I got out of High School, and my mom.... After like... halfway...., like.... after 6 months after being out of high school.... my mom was scared that I wasn't going to do anything so she just like said you gotta go to school....and so she just kinda like influenced me to just go to XXXX... yeah... yeah.... she was getting freaked out.... uh.... I take Adderall... and to be quite honest... I don't really need it except for like when I'm taking math class...I don't need it that much anymore...um.... I think just confidence... you know.... Just... just... getting older I think... just being more focused on what you wanna do...I think that's an ok answer?.... And I think also I just know that.... the Adderall works better... like.... just small things... like making sure you eat enough... and making sure uh.... That your already busy doing work... so your mind already kinda focused... and then you take the Adderall and then your more focused on it...., then if you just take Adderall, then you can focus on anything.... So... that's something I learned.... Plus, my mom kinda helped me with that....

EJ#9 describes his mom as “phenomenal,” and outlines how she raised him and his brother as a single mom, getting them involved in sports to “keep them off the streets of Alaska.”

EJ#9 : Uh..... it's weird.... 'cause I'm like.....20 years old... I feel like I'm at like a very weird stage in my life... where like.... I've been away from my mom since I was like 14.....so.... like.... not having her in my life.....kinda is weird... oh man..... it was.....ah.... I had a very..... I think I had a very weird childhood..... but it was amazing none-the-less.....um..... I have a phenomenal mom....and my mom was not having it.... my mom was like I am not raising my kids around that..... and my little brother was just born.....and she like..... took us one day and..... that's the last we ever saw of him.... the greatest decision of my mom's life I feel like.... And then like growing up..... my mom's a single mom.... She had my oldest brother when she was like.....16.....so she didn't go to school.... She didn't go to collegebecause of that.... and so like.....um..... like.... we were moving around a lot....like... we were staying with people.....we had our own place sometimes.....you know.....it was very hard..... but uh..... my mom always kinda did the best....as far as like.... For me.....the way she kept me and my brother off the streets of Alaska was she put us in sports.... And then.... My mom gave us freedom..... and like.... That was a big thing.....she was like freedom..... she was like... you get in trouble.... You get in trouble.....like she taught us that early.....and so that was really nice.....'cause like... the older I get.....like I have friends now that they are in deep stuff.....and I'm just like.... I 'm glad my mom like.... Did that.....but...like.... I kinda like....slowly started to pull myself away from

my mom....just because like..... I want my mom to know that.... I 'm always going to be fine... like... like.... I have a little brother and a little sister.....too....like... I'm like mom you have other people.... I'm fine.... I'm out here.....I'm good enough that I can survive and be on my own.... You don't have to worry.....but if I have any questions..... or need any help.....I can always come to my mom.....

Several participants reported that their grandmothers played an instrumental role in their lives during their formative years. More specifically, several participants reported living with their grandmother during for certain periods of time. The participants described their Grandmother as “a constant,” nurturer, disciplinarian, care taker, and an influence on their religious beliefs.

EJ#9 Illustrates how his grandma has been a “constant,” and religious influence in his life, and goes on to describe her as a “strong Polynesian woman.”

[K: So is she..... so it sounds like she is a woman of great faith? Is she a woman of faith?]

EJ#9: oh yeah! She's like um..... when I was younger.... you know like those really old VHS tapes? . . . I used to watch those like constantly..... because my Grandma was always watching those old Bible movies and what not.....And you know they were like really bad quality..... bad acting....

K: So she had you watching those with her?

EJ#9: Yeah...[laughter]....

[K: Wow..... Wow... so your Grandma definitely ummmm..... was an influence.....]

EJ#9: but the only thing that stayed constant was like my grandmother's trailer....where my family lives there.... So... it's like....like my grandmother.... knows just knows just about every family in Alaska.....like.... that's Samoan of some kind.... just 'cause like.....she's just like that kind of person!...Yeah.... yeah.... I was constantly at churches with all these other people.... I was playing around with kids a lot.... So that was like really helpful...'cause like.... I wasn't doing anything else.... just like with my grandmother at church.... like she'd pay me McDonalds money [laugh]....ummm.... they're probably some of the toughest people in the world... I'm not going to lie.....like just with like.... Everything my grandmother's been through...like given my mom's older brothers... I feel like.... like.... literally..... like... they've walked around the world on their knees.....like.... like.... they've been

through a lot.... And somehow their all still..... like....my grandmother's about to turn 80....and I'm just like..... I don't even know how she's still alive like.....she's been so much....and she's like.... She has diabetes.....so she's always on dialysis... and she'll like disappear for a week and come back.....and end up in the ER.... And come back out and just go to dialysis.... like none of that happened.... And keep going about her day.... like.....there was this one time...where like.... When I was younger.... we driving down from a church function...my older brother was like.... You don't look alright.... Are you good?.... she was like.... I'm just feeling sleepy.... Junior drive.....so he hopes in the front seat.... drives.... and then.... She's having a heart attack in the seat.... And we don't know that she is..... and she's like I need to go to the ER.... Go to the ER.....and this is when they first did like a pacemaker and all that..... and then.... The next day she was back at the church.... And I was like.....The next day... she was back at church.... She was like I gotta go set up the church.... I was like grand mom what are you talking about!.....and she's like had two of them... and its crazy.... How she's still alive.... cause she's traveled to all these places.....like her health isn't even like.....normal health...like.... for someone who is like 80 years old...it is crazy.... She is like running around yelling all the time...it's amazing!....

TD#11: Describes his grandma as his “life,” he chronicles that she “met his needs, gave him love,” early on.

TD#11....I mean every weekend..... I would go do some odds and end for my Grand mom...like go get a newspaper from the store... O' my Grand mom was in my life...my Grandma was there...Both my Grand mom's....but my mom's mom was... I was the first....I'm the first...grand...for both of my family so.....ummm....so I was the favorite...you know.....umm.....she was.....don't hit him.....don't do this.....and come on over here....and you know.... At 5 or 6 my mom brought me a puppy..... and.....she was like.... well... you can keep the puppy if you stay here.....but if you go to Grand mom's I'm taking it back.....I'm going to Grand mom's..... um..... she met my needs..... she gave me the love....you know..... I don't remember my grand mom telling me she loved me....but...she gave me the love and the attention I needed....that I was missing from my mom....my mom had to take care of my two little sisters....and I think also.....

TD: Yep.....me and my Grand mom was like.....we were tight....you know.....

[K: Now when did she pass?....]

TD: 2001.....yep.....

[K: That was probably hard for you.....]

TD: [whistle, tears welling inside his eyes]..... just talking about it's hard.....it was hard 'cause she was close.....um.....that was my rock.....that's who I went to.....you know...

DW#2 Describes "she was always there for us."

DW#2: and my moms, mom I sometimes keep in touch with my grandma, she lives in Seattle,...but she really does not keep all that in touch either..... yep, I used to live her, and she used to live with us, over some summers, I think..... and that's probably why I keep in touch with her, a lot more then with my other family... pretty good, she always took care of us... nicely... talk to us, always there for us, and she let us live with her a little bit when I was younger...my grandma died about a year and a half ago, I think....

WT#5 describes his grandma as a strict disciplinarian who was highly religious, and instilled the value of religion and respect in him. He reports that he lived with Grandma for approximately 1 year.

WT#5: So what happened was that at the same time, that was happening, my dad messed around on my mom, had a girl on the side, I was just a kid, but I do understand the process of... and um.. and although it bothered me... inside... I didn't understand cause I was just to young. She took us to my Grandmother's house to stay for awhile, how that's how I ended up in St. Ignatius, which is right around West Philadelphia... she know Christ., yeah she knew God. She was spiritual.. you know.. but she would still beat you with the extension cord... she wasn't that spiritual....she said spare the rod, girlfriend took that literally!!!! She'd.... beat to tha... lawd have mercy, you'd start crying before she started... I was crying when she beat by sister so bad... I was crying and she wasn't even beatin' me... I'm crying why she was gettin' beat.. I was like lawd... and when called you, you said yes mam! Wasn't no huh, or what, like these kids do today... man, she was strong! And I had that respect, and I had that foundation....So we'd sit up, my mom was still was working hard, she left us with my grand mom, till I think we got... I think.... I was like maybe 11 or 12... we only stayed maybe a year... but it seemed like forever..... we were there...

School experience

Five (40%) of participants reported teachers, professors and school counselors during their primary, secondary and post-secondary school experiences who influenced them.

GB#13 Reports being told by counselors and teachers that he was “smart and gifted.”

GB#13: privilege...thank you.....it kinda against that....but sometimes I would almost feel that way....like I could get away with certain things....Because teachers, psychologist and counselors knew..... we don't want to set him back....perhaps I was just blessed with the people around me.....but I would do something wrong and they would say.....ah....yeah I've been suspended....but there were times.....where it was like..... we don't want to suspend him....we know.... Principals, counselors, psychiatrists, uh.....counselors..... you know...staff.....

[K: So people in the school systems?....]

GB#13: Yes! School system....yeah.....despite the fact that I was rebellious and, and ornery...but I was also respectful and you know.....kind.....you know... and to them... I gave them a sense of... He's got something that he can offer to the world...and I felt like maybe I'm throwing that away...

SC#3 describes a high school counselor noting that he was an honor roll student and suggested he apply to XXXX

SC#3....So being high school, middle to high school I was always in honor roll, distinguished honor role, so my teacher and my counselors noted that. So there was a counselor meeting for senior year, rather junior year, they were like hey we see you are doing very well with your classes' we would like you to get ahead, what do you think about dual enrollment. So I asked what is dual enrollment?... I had never heard of that before, so he elaborated and said you can be in high school, and it's a dual admission program, you can work with the college and start your college credits early. So he suggested that there are a couple schools around majority of our students go for XXXX, its not to far away....and its an excellent school with lots of different programs, like nursing, psychology, biology, you can get a plethora of programs, and majors you can join into, that way you can get a good head start feel of what the college experience is like without being burdened down with all the credits at one time....my high school counselor, his name is Mr. Zimmerman, pushed me on, saying hey, I think this would be a great start for you..... yes mam. Yes, mam. So teacher wise I am recognized, by them, by a different State over a decade ago... they still know exactly who I am... so I am glad I had that kinda left that kind of impact on them still.

Um...administrators, counselors and teachers.....

Three participants reported positive experiences with professors at XXXX.

TD#11 identifies Professors by name whom he likes and the classes he enjoys.

TD#11: I mean like.... The teachers are like..... I haven't had a jerk professor yet!..... I haven't had one yet....Professor Youngblood.... I love her class....St. Pierre, I have her.....I love her class...Shoemaker, I loved his class.....my co-worker is his neighbor.... So he told me about him..... and other people told me.... you need to take him.... You need to take him...So I took him..... Every time I took a Psychology class in high school and stuff.....the best Professors are Psychology and Sociology their good..... um....hummm....yep.... him and Professor Forsyth..... I ran into him at Sky Zone.... I had him about 2 years ago.....and I was like hey you remember me.....and he was yeah, I remember you..... he didn't remember my name, but he remembered my face... he come in with his little Hawaiian stuff on.... And...masks... that's what I like about XXXX.....it's not tense.....it's not tense...

GB#13 describes personal interactions with Professors that have been helpful to him.

GB#13 Dr. J. about that.....and she expressed some of her own experiences and that....learning to say no...I was talking to someone....it was a professor here.....or something... Yes! It was a Professor.... World Mythology I'm taking.... and I can't think of his name....and that's sad because I really enjoy his class.....we were talking....and I was talking about him [JB]...and I was like man!..... If I were.... you know..... had been where I am at that age..... I probably would be doing what your doing right now!.....at this time.... but I had to live through a lot of things to get to this point...you know....it was much faster back then.... I was like talking about him [JB]....and he's like... I wonder where he got that from...[laughter]...

TW#10 identifies Professors and Administrators who have been helpful to him at XXXX

TW#10 here... I have to say.... Professor Stolfus...she's been helpful....ah.... Victor Ramous.... He's been helpful.... Professor Neff Ryan.... He's been helpful.....um.... there's a lot of other Professor's.....you've been helpful.....and..... ah.....

Motivated to Succeed for Others, External Rewards

Seven (60%) of the participants reported extrinsic reasons for persistence. Some of the extrinsic motivations held true to internal factors. For example, some participants were motivated to persist for family members, to “to give back,” to create a legacy, and persistence for financial security. At least one of the two international students in this study hoped to earn their degree, obtain employment to assist in creation of a new life for himself in the United States. Several participants saw others who graduated from college and wanted the material goods and lifestyle associated with earning a college degree.

EV#1 Discusses wanting a better quality of life as extrinsic motivation to persist.

EV#1....and they had something I wanted, like cars, a house, you know a better quality of life.and at an early age I did want to become a homeowner, and I realized later on that I would need college, to get a better opportunity and better marketing tool....

GB#13 describes the realization that he was coming to school to get a job to make more money, and how that is changing for him. He goes on to explain how he is motivated to persist to inspire his kids.

GB#13 but.... I've always felt that I could do more...I thought it was monetary..... I could do more monetary..... I could make more money.... I could make money....I could make money..... I could be a millionaire.....but you know um.... My initial thought coming here.....had nothing to do with that.....and I guess that's where everything kinda changed.....[silence].....um.....I think that would be accurate for most people.....I can't really pinpoint what you mean by something inside of me.....I mean... I'm motivated by a lot of things.....you know...especially my children.....um.....when... I decided to make this journey.....it was obviously for myself[emphasis].....but after the first semester, and I saw how successful I was.....I said I want to set an example.....you know..... for all the kids.... You know.....so they can..... you know....if he can do it....I can do it.....and try to envelope myself in the world that I hope that they will eventually enter.....so that I would understand.... what they're going through, and maybe be a support system for them.....um....since.... I

didn't do it at a younger age....now I'm doing it with them.....uh....you know.....so for each and ever journey... him in particular.... Because I have a step daughter....who I was hoping would take the journey of college life.....but she choose a different path.....you know.....I just wanted to be someone who could understand their journey as well.....

JB#12 grapples with explaining how his dad, GB#13 motivates him persist.

JB#12: no like... I listen... and... I just think to myself... on what I 'm gonna do get better... I just... That's something I gotta work for myself....um.....sometimes I think....like.....get it done and you won't have to hear it no more....I just.....it's something I still gotta work on...for myself...the more he talks to me....the more I want to do the work...so he can stop talking....[laughter] but.....you know.....I don't wanna say it will never happen..... But I'm still struggling with.... I guess you can say maturity.....For me to... I don't know.... I can't explain it....

TD#11 reports the external motivation of wanting to become a college basketball coach as motivation to persist.

TD#11.....and..... I found out that in order for me to be a college basketball coach..... I gonna need a degree.... Yeah so I wanna be a college basketball coach, and I need some type of paperwork with that.....

DW#2 reports that he wants to persist to help support his family.

DW#2: I still have my family and stuff... one of reasons I wanted to go to college, was to support my family...

JJ#4 reports being motivated by friends who graduated from XXXX.

JJ#4: yeah, um... well I know...like I said... a lot... a lot of my friends now, not that I grew up with, but a lot of friends I've made over the past few years... have come here [XXXX], graduated, and like I said.. ther' like... 20,30 years older then me... and I am like... if ya'll can go back to school.... [laugh] I can go back to school [laugh]

RC#6 states, "now my motivator is my girlfriend."

RC#6: um..... well... my motivator now is my girlfriend...
yeah... she works and she...often times she says I wish you can
work, because you can do so much...like...

RC##6 describes his desire to remain in the United States after graduation as
motivation to persist.

RC#6 First... in order to get the VISA... um.... Getting accepted is one
thing.... We had to have the money for one semester, one year..... one
year.... So when we changed.... It was 24 something.... But when I got
here... it wasn't that for one year... I was like.... What... it was less for
one semester... it was like...\$3,600 for one semester... yeah...
Because in my country...like... education is like a waste... I would say it's
like not a big thing... I would say you can get the highest degree, but to get
a job is a problem... you have to have like connections.... If you don't
have connections, you won't be able to get a job.... So a lot of people they
don't really value college... because you can go to college and graduate
tomorrow and you won't get a decent job... you have to have... they call it
links... like links in a chain... you have to have connections.... Like a lot
of big official people they don't even go to college.... yes, it's all about
links... links....

[K: Now in terms of your citizenship... you said....]

RC: I'm a ACT I student...

[K: So... what... tell me a little bit more about that... what does that
mean?]

RC: like I'm I come to go to school here, but I'm from another
Country ...So I'm not a green card holder....until I get married etc., get a
job offer...then that status will change..

[K: Then you'll automatically become a citizen?]

RC: Not a citizen, like... a green card holder.... yeah...

[K: So have you thought about what your going to do...were your going
to plan to stay here... or...?]

RC: Yeah, yeah .. I 'm planning to stay here... because...like... when I
went down this winter [visited Jamaica]..... I was like there's nothing...
in Jamaica.. it's so hard to study here, and go back....everything seemed
so foreign when I went back...

EC#8 Describes external motivation to remain in the United States due to better education
and employment opportunities in the United States.

EC#8: No... No... I am talking about getting opportunity to get an

education.... not having an education.....so scholarships are not available that..... abundantly so to speak....and um..... it's a handful of chosen few...that I chosen.... I say..... by the government of the day.... If you know some political person.... your.... your..... being favored.....if not your just.... The simple reason for that is the financial resources in our country are not available.... For everybody.....so then.....it's the person who sits there will determine.... If we really have 6 scholarships.... then he's going to determine... which 6 is going to get it.....and if you not connected...or don't write a particular party... you will not be given the blessing... so to speak... eell..... yes, definitely because I.... I..... believe that since we have migrated.....the.... pressure.... The need to be on top of your game is even more crucial... yes here... because....like the feelings always there.....and so to avoid that you must ensure that.....you have your bases covered.... You do what you need to do to ensure success..... Yes! The green card we have an issue with that.... like I said....

Supports

The last subtheme that addresses the first research question of cultural factors that led to African American male persistence is “Supports.” Supports are described as “external factors,” in the research participant’s mezzo environment that provide some type of assistance.

Two participants JI#4 and WT#5 report being involved in a 12-step fellowship that provides them with support.

JI#4 I'm also in recovery, so attending 12 step meetings.... and making sure that my spiritual, emotional, physical needs are met and maintained. Um... it's ah.., it can hard to juggle all those roles, and find an appropriate balance... ummm.. sometimes it make be like eh... [laughter] is it, this better be worth it!!!

WT#5: they welcome you with open arms... they welcome you right where you at...

And that's what God do... I'll meet you right where you at... There's a man, and somebody shared with me.. this guy who go down the same street.. and fall in the same whole, keep doing the same thing... the guy in the whole... says somebody came along, and jumped down in the whole with him.. and he said, why would you come in the whole, where I am with all this pain, and he said because I been here before, and I can show you how to get out..

TD#11 reports coworkers as source of help for him.

[K: um.... Sounds like it was therapeutic...your job.....]

TD: Yes....yes..... it's a treatment facility.....it helped me..... I used to take the stuff home and read it.....and I had low self-esteem.....I was depressed....you know...I was a bully.....um.....like wow..... that was me?.....man..... Ah....the job in general.....but... I always was.....I started my job at 22....you had to be 21 to work there...so I was always the young one...but...they didn't look at me like that..... these guys were in their 30's and 40's and they talked to me like.....I was on their level....but everything they was saying to me.....I'm taking in... Co-workers.....my coworkers have a big influence on me...they don't even know it but they do....but when you work 3rd shift they gotta stay up....and talk and..... you get to know people.....until I got my job I was like...everybody thought like me....like when I'd see kids tear their bread off their food.....I be like...man that's weird.....who does that...then I was like hold up....people think differently than you...you gotta be ok with that.....

Two participants, TW#10 and WT#5, identify pastors at their church as a source of help in their persistence efforts.

TW#10: Uh..... [Silence] let me see.... Well my Pastor's been helpful spiritually.... He's been helpful spiritually...

WT# : Well, I hadn't been at school for 20 years, so over 20 years. So for me this was like starting new, like a babe. So I went to him humbly and I asked him, and I shared with my Pastor, 'cause he had went through college...

Q2. What Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Factors Negatively Impact African American

Male Persistence

The second research question sought to determine what micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African-American male persistence. The two overall themes are “Internal Barriers,” and “External Barriers.” This section specifically identifies and defines

the subthemes that negatively impact persistence, including “Self-Isolation,” “Lack of Motivation,” “Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt and Self -Blame,” (Internal Barriers), and “Early Childhood Experiences – Poverty, Family, and Education Experience,” and “Green Card Status” (External Barriers). Although the subthemes of Self-Isolation,” “Lack of Motivation,” “Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt” and “Self-Blame,” are not situated in the micro environment, these subthemes emerged solidly in this study, therefore are identified as character traits that negatively impact African American male persistence.

Self-isolation Lack of motivation, and Lack of focus, Self-doubt and Self-blame

These three subthemes are combined as thirteen (100%) of participants describe experience in these areas. Although these internal barriers are not situated in the micro, mezzo or macro environment of the participants, these internal barriers solidly emerged as individual traits that negatively impact persistence. Therefore, these internal barriers are presented in this study.

TW #10 reports that he has few friends, and lives in supportive housing where “he stays to himself.”

[K: so... You basically stay to yourself and they stay to themselves.....] [Self-isolation]

TW: Yes....

TD#11 describes not being motivated to continue his education at certain intervals in his college career.

TD#11 I had already..... tried to enroll....but I didn't have the motivation..... I was like I am already doing ok..... why do I need a degree?....I felt like I was doing o.k..... even though I really wasn'tbut at that time that was my mindset...

JB#12 reports incidents of lack of discipline, while GB#13 reports incidents of self-doubt.

GB#13: I hadn't thought about college in the back of my mind.....you know..... but I thought it was way out of my reach.....

JB#12: Ah.....He kinda tells me all the time.....ah.....that the decisions that I make.....I tend to go out more then not do the work..... I believe that stops me from doing that..... I think just myself.....

JB#12: [sitting up and leaning forward] um..... kinda just like gettin' it done.....like most of the time when I'm writing songs down.....I have like a lotta songs that I wrote down....and a lot of songs that I wrote down.....and I never finished them..... so like ever song that you hear that....there just like cut off right in the middle..... I need more done..... I normally like to go to a studio.....'cause I feel like I can get it done more.....more efficient.....I feel like I be more focused.....'cause I sit at home and there's so many other things to do.....[laugh].....sometimes I can sit down and I just focus on the music.....for a little bit....and then there's other times when I don't do that.....I want to wait when I can go in a studio to have that type of time....to go to just straight on music..... and that's kinda how I feel about here as well.....when.....for my school work..... I don't tend to like to do my school work at home.....as often..... I feel like if I come here.....it's like I devote..... It's like I am focused.... But sometimes friends get in the way.....sometimes.....my dad tells me all the time.....you gotta tell 'em to move off.....it's more like..... I come here.....mostly everyday.....well..... everyday.....uh.....there is only one day I actually missed.....its really just when I go home.....and when I want to study and stuff..... I don't really like to find that time.....um.....I just feel tired from work..... and I just want to leave it alone.....um.....probably shouldn't be doing that but.....that's what..... I tend to do mostly.....and then you know..... I come here..... and I like to sit down at the computer.....and once I'm at the computer.....I get focused on the work and I get it done.....

GB#13: so that was my biggest road block.....allowing outside responsibilities and trying to be of service to too many people.....

Early childhood experiences and family

Seven (70%) of participants identified adverse conditions during formative years that seemed to shape their persistence efforts. These adverse conditions include poverty

(perception of poverty), family relationships, and primary and secondary education experience. Four students recount experiences of growing up in poverty.

WT#5 reports growing up in a community where drugs were present.

WT#5: 'Cause I knew better.... And when I came home, I had money... I was up... I was built... man... I was exercising.... running 3,4,5, miles a day, and I came home and people here weren't doing nothin' and then things had changed in my neighborhood... like where we used to get marijuana 10 joints in a fat brown envelope bag., and they had these little plastic bags and they wanted \$10, and I said you not gonna rob me, cheat me.... And dude said here's your money, don't ever come back here again... you know what I mean.... You gonna have problems.... And so... I didn't understand, why my cousin, I mean my best friend wanted me to loan 'em, borrow \$50, you know... and which I never got my money back.... It didn't, they were freebasing.....so I came back, I didn't know nothin' I was just so naïve.. I am in the house waiting on them... he wanted me to loan him \$50, and I say's no problem... so can we get something to drink!!?? 'cause I'm a drinker. In military that's all we do is drink...so can we... go to the liquor store and get something to drink... man... what's going on, what ya'll doing... ever body looked all... they take and put this stuff in a coffee pot, and cooking this stuff... and then all a sudden the girl take it all out... and I... man I don't know nothin' bout that man.. give me the drink...and I didn't understand nothing....and the girl ran upstairs and disappeared... and I said man I'm getting' ready to go... man...

[K: So people in the environment were doing it...]

W: They were already exposed to it, and it was already in the community.. it wasn't crack yet. Crack hadn't come out yet....and I always commended her, I said... you know.... You pay the greater price, 'cause your all around that mess in Philly... its just out of control... its on the corner... in neighborhoods...

TD#11 describes African American families “financial situation,” and the implications.

TD#11: It plays a big role... you look at... you look at..... African America males... African Americans period.....we are... our families don't put us in the financial situation to be successful...But you look at Caucasians... even Asians they.... They.... Come here.... And their here... and they set their children up to be successful.....they don't force their kids out of home..... but for some reason in the African American.... Black community..... we like.....your 18 you gotta go.....and why?....But I didn't have.....anybody in my family that could help me.....I did all my college applications.....I did all my financial aide packet..... I didn't live with my mom... I was living with my Aunt at the time.... and they didn't know how to do that..... I just got all the information from my

mom and my aunt and put it on the application...

RC#6 Describes childhood poverty, and recent visits to his home country, and the experience of poverty.

RC#6: Well, um... first I was home schooled, high school, home schooled... um... so my, mom... um I call her mom, because they really raised me in Jamaica. They were missionaries to Jamaica. They were running a boy's home, they raised about 500 boys. Street boys... boys that were having problems at home. I was one of those boys... I wasn't having problems at home, my dad...um.... My real dad.... Was married to a different lady...well and he had me with my mom....so it was becoming a problem...so... my dad um... came to... well which is my dad now... say can you keep my son for a week until... things got resolved, or whatever... well the week become 14 years... so they raised me, schooled me.. All of that, like... I was in special care... but I was still in the boy's home... Yeah, yeah .. I 'm planning to stay here... because...like... when I went down this winter [visited Jamaica]..... I was like there's nothing... in Jamaica.. it's so hard to study here, and go back....everything seemed so foreign when I went back... oh, yeah... for awhile... ah... for awhile... Yeah...Yeah...In... there's nothing.... Your just so accustomed to here... you know...

[K: So your socialized to being here in Lancaster County... in the United States...]

RC#6: Having the internet at your fingertips....having food service at your fingertips....it's like.. when you go there its like..... you feel so stressed....

K: Because you don't have those basics...

RC#6: What people take for granted here..... take for granted....

K: so it sounds like your gonna look at being a citizen... staying here..

RC#6: Yeah... and like... going to my Country....I feel so disgusted because... like... with immigration... In my own Country... I have the most struggle.. at immigration...

K: Tell me more about that...

RC#6: ok.. so.... you get off the plane... get your bags... and when I went the first time I went.. they ask question like....don't you see my passport... don't see I live here....how long do you plan to stay here.... They ask some like real retarded questions....like.... are you being for real right now?...I'm Jamaican....Even if I go to the United States to live...I'm Jamaican... like... come on... so in December when I went....they check my... so I try..... to bring... cause I had some new nieces....and nephews that I never met before....like newborns....so I tried to bring stuff for them... so.. they charge you for ever single piece of....

K: So is there corruption there?

RC#6: Yes, there is a lot of corruption... I was like...

K: wow...

RC#6: There is a lot of corruption there.... With the police.... The government....

EJ#9 Reports his experience of poverty while growing up in Alaska.

EJ#9: Well the biggest thing has always been money..... money was always being hard growing up..... ummm... yeah..... so like we lived in like the inner city [quote unquote] um....but the inner city is still kinda..... vast.... It's not like Philly's inner city....like where everything is like..... where not metropolitan level....but like...um.....we were in the city.... But where still kinda out there...like I grew up.....going from like apartment -to- apartment..... but the only thing that stayed constant was like my grandmother's trailer....where my family lives there.... So... it's like.... yeah..... and like..... 'cause I live in like a trailer park.....so it's like a ton of people that are all..... seem to be like... in the same kind of situation.... But we were like....um.....it's very weird..... because we weren't like super low.... But we weren't like...high.... Where I lived.... We were like..... like....everyday is still kinda a struggle....like...kinda thing.... oh yeah.... that's all you need.... You can go to the bath room.....um..... and I could always shower..... it might cold.... But I can always shower.....

Seven (60%) of participants report family dynamics that appear to have impacted them negatively. From mom's relationship(s), to missing relationship with dad. Several participants currently have no relationship with their biological father, while some report a strained relationship with their fathers. The effects of absentee fathers, and strained mother and father relationships on African American male persistence include no prescriptive guidelines to inform participants how to be an African American male in college, or guidelines of how to navigate society as an African American male.

EV#1 reports he has no relationship with dad and his "father situation."

EV#1: its like a strange father situation, where this man was on drugs, alcoholism, abusive, and I couldn't really be around him, I missed him, but at the same time I didn't want to be around someone like that, its not that I want to point the finger, but it just... you can't expect a child to

achieve being around something like that... Then he got that woman he was dating pregnant. But he/she didn't know that he got some other woman pregnant.... But all the people in the family knew.... wait, wait, wait.... that these two children being born in the same year but two months apart.... and it wasn't until like the age 7 when my dad did marry a woman, and she asked me my age and my sister my age, and that's when she realized.... Woe... so I feel like my dad was being secretive about it

[K: ok. and so.. do you feel that that hindered or effected your efforts at XXXX? or...]

EV#1: It does in a way, its like.... I look at my sister, she's was like the same age as me, she went to college, she did well in her first year, but then she repeated the same mistakes her mom did... and got pregnant, and then life changed, and its going on 12 years, and she still has not come through with a degree

GB#13 Reports that his dad was in the home growing up, "but he wish he had not been there."

GB#13: He was in the house.... growing up... I'll a be honest with you..... I just wish he wasn't in the house.... cause I mean the whole house changed.... he wasn't like abusive.... he didn't scream holler or curse... I think my dad.... I never heard him use the "F" word.... you know...he said, damn it or shit every once in a while... or something like that maybe....he was just a...firm..... he was born in 1921.... ok....and so.... he..... he just wasn't.... you know..... very communicative.... with me....and he didn't have that either.... I mean... he was a lumber jack and a truck driver....at the age of 13..... You know.... his father was actually murdered....by his mother....so I mean.... his life was way different then mine...and his step father.... who he's actually named after [gestures to JB]was extremely [emphasis] stern on him....you know...I remember hearing stories...he was a black man in South Carolina....and uh....White men feared him...back in..... you know..... Were talkingJim Crow Era..... in the 1940's and 30's...so.... But....going back....um.....my..... ah.... I didn't think that he ever taught me anything.....but then I was in the Marine Corp one day.....and I was like I don't have a dad.... whatever....and someone said of course you have a dad....'cause your here... Yeah.... I kinda grew up thinking.... you know.... I never really had a dad... 'cause it wasn't like.... your uh.....you know.... Rockwell portrait of a father.... you know what I mean?.....and I never had that.... but.... he taught me how to be a better man.... but it was....it wasn't.... what I am sure he intended to do.....but... I learned anyway....so... I do

different...then what he did.... I'm completely opposite...not to say better... just different...

LE#7 Outlined "resentments" he holds against his dad and how this resentment impacted his behavior.

LE#7: Yeah..... Yeah.... But I remember... I resented my dad.... 'cause I saw what he was doing... when I was...before now... 'cause I appreciate everything he does for me now.... Because I've messed up so badly..... [laugh] just going out..... being insecure with things....you know..... just drink... you crash your car.... Get angry... hydroplane.... 'cause your driving to fast... Yeah, yeah...um.... . I, I was always tryin' to be like a man.....you know..... but now I feel like a man.... you know... I feel like I can be myself...so when I feel insufficient I get angry... I blame it on my dad.... 'cause I thought he was like being a weakling... 'cause he did just... didn't just like break things off with my mom immediately you know.....

Two participant's TD#11 and DW#2 report struggles in their relationships with their mothers around moms these relationships with boyfriends.

TD#11:me, and my sisters and my mom..... and my mom had numerous boyfriends.....and I didn't respect them.... And I saw things that I probably shouldn't saw...that made me loose respect for my mom....that I look back on...that I wish I could change...um....and I respect my mom, but.....it should be more...most boys their mom is god [emphasis].....and my mom wasn't.....and it bothers me to this day.....I try to fix it....but it's like... um hum.....because like I could never understand why my mom would date guys who didn't have, bring anything to the table....I missed at a young age... 10,11 years old....like mom.....he ain't got no car.....what's he's gonna do.....and I'm thinking like..... he's eating all my food..... I can't watch TV.....he's sitting on the couch.....and you know.....it's just like yo!.....like.....he living with us!..... when you gonna get somebody that got a car.....that take care of us... that I can actually build a relationship....at that time.....when I look back at it.....all I was looking for was a father...a father figure..... and they weren't.....all they were was boyfriends.....just having sex with my mom....he never..... I remember one she had he would call me fat.....and that....and I was....and I.... and I said mom he keep calling me fat.....and this and that....and I was no where near fat[emphasis]..... ever in my life...I gained weight now,

but...I was always built[emphasis]...you know.. his way of puttin' me down was calling me fat..... and I used to just bother me..... I was like..... man this guy.....it used to motivate me too....like I'm a prove him wrong, and one day I'm a beat him up...and he was from Virginia.... And he moved back to Virginia.....but always say.....look at me now.... You know um.... but I didn't respect none of my mom's boyfriends..... you couldn't take care of me and my sisters....that's not a man.....all you doing is humping on my mom....as I got older.... That's how I looked at it as I got older...you just humping on my mom....because my mom was attractive.....my mom was attractive looking and um....she was young... and she went out.. she went out.....my mom went out...she partied.....she didn't do drugs but she partied...like her friends...like our house was the meet up spot.....before they go out to the bar.....and they leave at like 12 o'clock and then they come back at 2[am].....

DW#2: yeah, its been kinda like a big process, because their like are like fighting a lot at home. So I gotta make sure, that if anything were to happen... that's why I saved up a lot of money, just in case we can live somewhere else by ourselves for a while we can do that...

Four (40%) including EV#1, RC#6, EJ # 9, and JB#12 reported negative encounters in secondary and postsecondary education with tracking, and encounters with teachers or professors that negatively impacted them.

EV#1 describes his experience with learning support and "tracking."

EV#1: oh yeah, in high school they put me in a learning support program, but I felt like the learning support program was a hindrance because they expected me go through their program for next four years, then you graduate, and you just work your 9-to-5 job.... the other students, I didn't understand at the time, when I was in high school, but I learned it outside high school, that some of the students that graduated from college were taking advanced placement, dual enrollment, and they were more surrounded by those resources, then someone who was overlooked by me....I can't say it was the counselors, I can say it was certain teachers, my mom, its just like.... if you don't expect somebody to do something more, they are not going to do more. And when ...you put somebody in a learning support classroom, that its small environment, not their normal ...environment, no one is being really challenged, your not going, and sometimes some teachers see failure in their students....that's just how I see it... in my personal

opinion... at the same time, I feel like learning support targets African Americans and Hispanics.... because that is the majority of the population, and at the same time, many of them come from single parent household.... so that could be a targeting.....

RC#6 chronicles his struggle with one specific professor and what he describes as biased treatment. In addition, he describes some professors as not being committed to student's education.

RC#6: Yeah... that's um... well....I realize that the Professor's here are like.... I would say their not taking their jobs very seriously... I am a bit disappointed... to a certain extent to be honest... like.. I think going to a college, everybody should be treated fairly... and like... your grade is your grade.... Or whatever...like... because I've started from ESL....until now... it's not the same... like...[silence]... Professors that I'm having now...it's like... if they like you, they like you... if they don't like you your grade is not going to be so good..... they are like checking your paper... and I was like a little shaken up about that.... No.... No.... No... Communication... I am a little disappointed about communication..... ok.. so... for example... most of my classes are with Professor -----...like last semester and the semester before... like... I would get here... in class... no email, nothing... cause that's the first thing I check... and note that class is cancelled... and I'm like I'm paying for these classes. Like I'm paying more for these classes than anyone else.... So like... where is your part... I'm doing my part....showing up for class....ummmm... There's only one Professor, that I can name like... I know he's doing his job.....and it's Professor Shoemaker.....If I could give him an award for his class... I would give an award....He's doing his job....communication, everything is on point... it's on point.... Yeah.... And I'm paying to learn.. and I am not getting... ok.. ok..ok... read alright... its either I'm right or wrong.... It's my purpose in doing.. I talk to like some of my classmates...and their like I feel the same way.... I even talk to... I took English 002... well I have a lot of friends...just thinking about.. I have a lot of friends, because of us taking English class together.... Were still connected.. cause I'm like if this....if I know something I'm gonna share with you... yeah.. yeah..So I was talking to one of my friends....um... in the Subway Cafeteria... she's like... how come's were not learning anything from these Professor's.... and I'm like saying the same thing to... So its like... get up come to XXXX for

an hour and 15 minutes.... And leave...you try to ask a certain class.. its like keep it simple.... Even when you like raise your hand its like they ignore....

[K: Do you think it's the Professor... or do you think it's a bias... what do you think it is....?]

RC#6: I think its both....I think its both...

[K: ok...ok... so is it your observation... that you see them treat other people...differently...]

RC#6: umhum.... Unmum.... [no]... I said to one of my buddy in Criminal Justice... yeah... I saw it too... I want you to pass the class... I'm gonna make sure you pass the class....I just saw them last week... that's why I'm saying like..... its based on..... if I like you or not.....

K: which is that biased.... Wow....

RC#6: Yeah... and that's not fair....you put in all that hard work and its like their judgment.... I even realize that in my criminal justice group.. I do my paper way in advance... I ask my friends...did you do our paper... oh we have a paper due? Today... they rush to computer.... See his grade... and I say... this is not fair....come on..... nope, I'm not getting that... I even went to my advisor and I made a complaint.... But the thing... but the feedback that I got... like the person's the head of Criminal Justice, are like... that don't solve my problem.. Everybody should be treated fairly...like... alright... I'm not racist or anything but... like with Whites.. and blacks... I should say with American citizens and with blacks... 'cause there was this other guy in my class... and like he dropped the class... 'cause I think he felt it... he dropped the class..

[K: So you think he felt the racism... or like the different treatment...]

RC: unhum... the different treatment... Even with the classmates... well not with... well with me ignore all that...

EJ# 9 describes an encounter with a Professor who openly supported negative political views in favor of President Trump.

EJ#9: my experience at XXXX.....oh man....um.....[silence] I would say yes.... Only because....like personally....I take my culture with me like...wherever I go....so... there's like not like a place where I don't take it with me.... because my culture is like.... literally who I am.....like that's my everything.....so...like..... the way it affects my experience at XXXX.... I kinda....like... XXXX goes through this microscope.... Like this tube....that has like a filter of my culture.... And like how it affects me..... so like.... The way that I perceive someone teaching something will run through like... how I would normally understand it....like the big thing right now is I have a teacher who is a Trump supporter....Politically.... I am completely

against that man.....and I am just not with all that.... and it takes a lot out of me not to say anything..... but just because.... Like... here's the classroom....like....like.... you just gotta be patient.....you know like things take time.....so I feel like....you know.... That's something that's really important to me.... and my culture....and God has a plan....like....like....like..... there's always a plan.... So I feel like....as long as I'm patient..... I stay in line... I wait for my time.....you know.....something goods gonna come out of all this....

JB#12, and his father GB#13 corroborates negative primary and secondary school experiences with oversight by teachers.

JB#12: um.....like teachers and staff.....you had your good ones and bad ones..... Um.....I was kinda listening to him and I had a similar experience..... But not like exactly.....maybe there were a few teachers who told me you can do this..... uh..... I do something bad and they would try to talk to me.....just like.....um.....they were encouraging me to do better.....I mean there were like some teachers who didn't really care.....um.....but there was no teachers didn't like care.....ever teacher that I had cared.....uh..... my elementary school....I went to two elementary schools.....I went Burrowes and Hamilton..... I went to Burrowes from K4- to 2nd grade and I went to Hamilton from 3rd to 5th..... Burrowes was very different from Hamilton..... um....I felt like Hamilton wasn't givin me.....not giving me but..... holding me back on certain things.....and I.....they were minor..... I was seeing the difference..... like my third grade year..... I had did something..... and um..... the teacher had told me you can go on the field trip, I'll let you go.....and um..... I had said something.....we were talking about a outhouse..... and I had said something about outhouses and the teacher wasn't going to let me go on the trip..... but she let me go.....my 4th grade year it was the book incident.... ah the book..... I ah..... never..... really finished any of my books.....but um.....my 5th grade year they did end up letting me go.... they ended up changing the system because of me..... they stopped doing Hershey trips a little bit.....because of..... They didn't like the fact that my teacher allowed me to on the field trip and I wasn't supposed to.....so was kinda like we can't do that no more.....um.....but um..... I don't want to say major things happened...more major things then the field trip incident.....I had, especially my 5th grade year.... I had people try to help me get the student of the month.....they tried to push me.....and the motivation I had.... and ah.....for some reason..... they never gave me student of the month.....

GB#13 : I felt bad for him..... I don't mean to interrupt you JB....but I raised 3 other children who were not my biological children..... they were my wife's children.....and they all got student of the month.....and he

was the only one that didn'tand I really kinda felt bad for him.....you know..... I am not going to go to the school and say give him student of the month..... and I was like what's going on here.....it just seem like.....it was like weird.....it's like why you doing this to this kid.....

Green Card Holders

As a final point of the experiences that negatively impact African American males experience of persistence, two (20%) of international students, RC#6 and EC#8 discuss their experience as green card holders. A green card refers to an immigration process of becoming a permanent resident. The green card serves as proof that its holder, a lawful permanent resident, has been officially granted immigration benefits, including permission to reside and pursue education (or take employment) in the United States (US Department of State, 2018).

RC#6 describes the process of getting to the USA from Jamaica, and his motivation to remain in America.

RC#6 So the same day... it was accepted...yeah... we prayed... we prayed... and then she called and said RC is accepted... we will be sending the information so he can go to the Embassy to get his Visa too...First... in order to get the VISA... um.... Getting accepted is one thing.... We had to have the money for one semester, one year..... one year.... So when we changed.... It was 24 something.... But when I got here... it wasn't that for one year... I was like.... What... it was less for one semester... it was like...\$3,600 for one semester... yeah...Because in my country...like... education is like a waste... I would say it's like not a big thing... I would say you can get the highest degree, but to get a job is a problem... you have to have like connections.... If you don't have connections, you won't be able to get a job.... So a lot of people they don't really value college... because you can go to college and graduate tomorrow and you won't get a decent job... you have to have... they call it links... like links in a chain... you have to have connections.... Like a lot of big official people they don't even go to college.... yes, it's all about links... links....

EC#8 describes the 10-year process of getting to America from Belize, and his desire to remain here to make a better life for he and his family.

EC#8: No... No... I am talking about getting opportunity to get an education..... not having an education.....so scholarships are not available that..... abundantly so to speak....and um..... it's a handful of chosen few...that I chosen.... I say..... by the government of the day.... If you know some political person.... your.... your..... being favored.....if not your just.... The simple reason for that is the financial resources in our country are not available.... For everybody.....so then.....it's the person who sits there will determine.... If we really have 6 scholarships.... then he's going to determine... which 6 is going to get it....and if you not connected...or don't write a particular party... you will not be given the blessing... so to speak....So it's.....so I was looking at this opportunity here...to further my education...first and foremost...Secondly.... My wife really wanted to come.... she was a bit exhausted with the system in Belize... having taught in the Belize for the last 26 years... she was getting enough... for more reasons than one... but particularly because of health issues.... She was coming down with Rheumatoid.... And she getting all weary....and so she wanted to come out the system... but unfortunately in Belize, if you are in a particular field, its very difficult to transition.... You must stay in that field until retirement.....if you are a police officer, you will be a police officer until the end.... If you're a soldier...till the end... you're a teacher... until the end.. because again..... the resources are not that available.... all of these sectors are all tied up.... Excuse me [pauses to take a phone call] ... so.... those are some of the driving factors.... ummm... we decided..... and.... Not really for ourselves... my wife and I, but for the children... if we were having difficulty getting access to further education... what would happen to them?.... Exactly... and so with that we decided we were going to pursue, and in pursuing.... Was really long... because it took 10 years...

EC#10: To get here.... Yes...paperwork started in October 2003..... I personally took in my application to INS in New York... As a matter of fact, that was my first trip to New York.....I've always been to California on my mother's side... Always there.....but decided to come to New York in 2003, October, and so... my dad and I sat down.... and my eldest brother... he knows a bit about the application... and so he took it in.....that was October 2003... and.... it was.... December 30.....December..... January 14..... that we got called from the Embassy..... The Embassy in Belize... saying your paper's are here, and this is what you need to do, and dah..dah...dah....dah.... no.... '13.... yeah..... We were communicating if there was any additional is needed... we were communicating with a VISA center in

Vermont.... Here in the United States..... Right.... Because the Embassy makes it clear to you that they are not involved until the file reaches Belize....so one of the first things you have..... Because I did call them a couple of times... and they said your case file is not in Belize so we can't.... Communicate directly with the VISA center.... Any questions you have... ask them..... Ok. And so that was the case.... And then the 10th year, 2013-2014.... That's when they gave us a call and said we are in possession of your file.....and the ball will start to roll onour end.....and so that's when it started... so from that December.... 2013.... We got things mobilized so we could have landed in New York... July 2015.....yeah.... And hence.... We all had to come..... as a family because..... the application is for the entire.... family....Because it is at the point when you enter... the United States... that's when you start the process of green card....so if you don't come they won't start it..... but you do have a limitation from the issuing of the VISA.... To the entrance of the United States.... Is only six months.... So that is the reason why we decided to come July '15... So by December '15 it would have been expired... ummmm.....I think the quest or eagerness for knowledge.... Particularly for the legal nature....like I said I did paralegal in Belize.... But two things about it.... It was so long ago.... It was 15 years ago, 16 years ago.....and it was that..... it was not as in depth.....it was only a certificate program... that the institution for those in the legal field or those in the magistrate Court.... to sign on... you know.... For career development.... You are basically bringing us a notch above.....so I enjoyed the opportunity..... but that having been done so long ago.... I had not been in a formal educational setting since then.... So I am looking forward to coming to XXXX... Well..... yes, definitely because I.... I.... believe that since we have migrated.....the.... pressure.... The need to be on top of your game is even more crucial... yes here... because....like the feelings always there.....and so to avoid that you must ensure that.....you have your bases covered.... You do what you need to do to ensure success..... Yes! The green card we have an issue with that.... like I said.... When we entered July..... 15th.... I think like by August or September it started coming in the mail.....so it was a big process..... so we now hold that status for the next 10 years..... However, in 10 years you have the option to renew or to make an application to be a citizen.....yes...

In conclusion, this chapter provided a synthesis of data findings, organized by the first research question the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence. The two overarching themes of “Internal Motivations,” and,

“External Factors,” the details of the subthemes “Self-Motivation/ Self Determination,” “Desire to succeed,” and “Faith and Religion,” (Internal Motivations) and “Family,” “School Experience,” “Motivated to Succeed for Others, External Rewards,” and “Support” (External Motivations) were provided. Although the subtheme of Self-Motivation/Self Determination is not situated in the micro environment, this subtheme emerged solidly in this study, therefore is being identified as character traits that aids in African American male persistence. The themes and other subthemes are situated in the participant’s micro, mezzo and macro environment. In addition, this chapter supported the synthesized data to address the second research question, the micro, mezzo, and macro factors that negatively impact African American male persistence. The two overarching themes, “Internal Barriers” and “External Barriers,” and subthemes of “Self-Isolation,” “Lack of motivation and Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt and “Self-Blame,” (Internal Barriers), and “Early Childhood Experiences-Poverty, Family, Educational Experiences,” and “Green Card Status” (External Barriers” were described. Although the subthemes of Self-Isolation,” “Lack of Motivation,” Lack of Focus,” “Self-Doubt” and “Self-Blame,” are not situated in the micro environment however, these subthemes emerged solidly in this study, therefore are identified as character traits that negatively impact African American male persistence. These themes and other subthemes are situated in the participant’s micro, mezzo and macro environment.

The next chapter will provide a discussion of the findings, and will also produce implications, and strengths and limitations of this study, as well as a final conclusion.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The overall findings in this study identified internal motivations and external agents that led to African American male persistence at the community college where this research took place. The findings in this study also revealed internal and external barriers that negatively impact African American male persistence at this community college. This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings, and cite scholarly literature to support the findings. In addition, this chapter will provide implications for social work in higher education, and social work research, strengths and limitations, and a final conclusion about African American males and persistence at the community college.

The findings presented in chapter 4 sought to answer two research questions about cultural factors and negative factors that lead to African American male persistence. The first research, what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence to graduation? The second research question what micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence? The key findings from research question one found the cultural factors of family, and religion and faith as key components to African American male persistence at this community college. Additional findings from research question one that are not related to culture but emerged as strong factors in persistence include school experience, motivation to succeed for others, external rewards and support. In addition, self-determination/self-motivation emerged as character traits that support the research participant's persistence efforts. Although, the character traits of self-determination/self-motivation are not micro, mezzo or macro environment, these traits strongly emerged as factors that led to the African American male persistence in this study, therefore are included in this discussion of findings. The key findings from

research question two, the factors that negatively impact African American male persistence revealed early childhood experiences and family, educational experience and participants “green card” status. Lastly, although considered character traits; self-isolation, lack of motivation, lack of focus, self-doubt, and self-blame strongly emerged as factors that negatively impact African American male persistence at the community college where this research was conducted. It is hoped that these findings and the subsequent implications for social work education and social work research will improve persistence of African American males who enroll at the community college where this research was conducted.

The first research question what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence found that seventy percent of participants identified the importance of family in their persistence efforts. Participants identified fathers, mothers and grandmothers as instrumental to their enrollment, and consequent persistence at this community college. For example SC#3 outlines how his dad moved him and his family from an urban city to the suburbs, so he could have a better life.

SC#3 my father is currently, he’s still a police officer down in Baltimore City. He’s not in the streets anymore, has a Captain, so he’s in the headquarters, working with a bunch of Colonels, and Commissioners up in the ranks, he’s on TV doing news broadcasting and stuff, its awesome to see my dad on there... that’s because he’s spent almost thirty years in the force, working his way up there to get me out of that area. So it’s a huge drive for me to think that they got out of that triangle, that circle, of just madness and chaos, and everything else you can imagine down in Baltimore City, to get me somewhere safe so I can be free and be better.

Another example of the important role fathers played in participant’s persistence efforts is evident as LE#7 describes his dad as an “influence on him.”

LE#7: No, no, he’s a State Trooper....He’s a State Trooper for 25 years....

And he's retired now he works at Costco's...um... but... he makes... he has a good pension... he makes good money... so that's fine... Yeah... I'd just say that... my dad's probably an influence on how I try to work you know.....He tries to be positive...

Interestingly, thirty percent of participants identified the importance of their grandmother's influence on their persistence efforts. The research participants described their grandmothers as a "constant, nurturer, disciplinarian, caretaker and an influence on their religious beliefs." For example TD#11: describes his grandma as his "life," he chronicles that she "met his needs and gave him love," early on.

TD#11.... O' my Grand mom was in my life....my Grandma was there...Both my Grand mom's....but my mom's mom was....so I was the favorite...you know.....umm..... um..... she met my needs..... she gave me the love....you know..... I don't remember my grand mom telling me she loved me.....but...she gave me the love and the attention I needed....that I was missing from my mom....my mom had to take care of my two little sisters....and I think also..... Yep.....me and my Grand mom was like.....we were tight....you know.....

[K: Now when did she pass?....]

TD#11: 2000...yep...

[K: That was probably hard for you...]

TD#11: [whistles, tears welling inside his eyes]... just talking about it's hard...it was hard 'cause she was close....um....that was my rock.....that's who I went to...you know...

Brooks (2015) explains that "family (kinship/extended, and/or fictive) support can have positive implications for academic persistence in college students" (p. 830). Jensen (2011) supports Brooks (2015) in the advancement that "for minority students, family support matters greatly in the retention and successful college experience" (p.3). Harper and Wood (2016), and Palmer, et.al, (2014) further concur with Brooks (2015), and Jensen (2011) that family support is critical for African American male persistence in the

academy. Palmer et.al. (2014) denotes the importance of the African American mother's support of her son as key to persistence.

According to Brooks (2015), and Brooks & Allen (2015), kinship bonds including extended family who provide encouragement to persist are of equal importance. Brooks (2015), and Brooks and Allen (2016) found that a grandparent serves to provide encouragement, a meal, nurturance, prayer etc., Interestingly in this study on African American male persistence found that grandmothers were identified more frequently, than mothers or fathers as important in persistence. Yosso (2005) explains the importance of family from a community culture wealth perspective. Yosso describes familial capital as a social and personal human resource drawn from a student's extended family. Yosso encourages college administrators and student service personnel to engage African American families as leverage for a positive college experience for the student (the family as an agent of persistence). Harper (2012) recommends equipping families with college knowledge to aid in African American male student success. In essence, participants report that family is important in persistence, and the literature corroborates this fundamental cultural truth. Since the research participants identified family as important in persistence, and the literature corroborates the importance of including family in persistence efforts, it makes sense to include the family as a cultural agent in African American male persistence at this community college (Brooks, 2015; Brooks, & Allen 2016; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Guiffrida, 2006; Ingram, Williams, Coaxum, 2016; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Mawhinney, 2012; Morley, 2003; Ntloedibe, 2006; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Palmer, et.al, 2014; Tierney, 1999; Wei, Ku & Liao, 2011).

The first research question about the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence found fifty percent of participants in this study reported that religion and faith were significant cultural factors that led to their persistence. The study participants provided rich recounts of praying, trusting, believing and relying on God to persist. In addition, the participants in this study also described how religion and faith were transmitted to them by their grandmothers and mothers who held strong religious convictions. For example, SC#3 outlines his upbringing in the church and the role of Jesus Christ in his life:

SC#3: Community, church, neighborhood, I think, I am a good ol' Christian church boy, I been going to that church since I was two weeks old, I was, I still go about 3 x's per week, cause I participate in small groups, I'm now a drummer in the worship band, I teach uh middle school every forth Sunday,.... After Sunday school I'll do the graphic design and set up the posters and everything... for our church, so I am very well endowed with the church. So when I am not anything school related, its pretty much church or work related. So I have a lot of people at my church that are my age that are also in very extraneous subjects and fields, like I have a friend that also going into the neuroscience field. So we always quiz each other, we always play around, talk about the nervous system, the peripheral nervous system. So it's only a competition, of who can best help who... which is awesome..... um... I would like to say that I would not be here without my faith in Jesus Christ.....

Ojo, 1997 describes people of African origin as “deeply religious,” and describes how religious life in African culture has influenced and characterized African American culture today (p.149). Wood & Hilton (2012) describe spirituality as a significant part of black culture, yet there is little talk about this in higher education. Wood & Hilton go on to discuss the importance of providing a space for spirituality for African American student's higher education. The findings in the Wood & Hilton (2012) study revealed that spirituality supports persistence and serves as a resilience factor. A study by Brooks & Allen (2016) found that students used religion to cope, and “through praying, trusting God

they experienced fewer anxiety symptoms” (p. 817). Since faith and religion are cultural factor that aid African American male persistence, and the literature confirms this fact, it makes sense to identify ways to integrate African American male’s faith and religion as tool to aid persistence at this community college.

Continuing with the first research question about the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence, forty percent of participants described positive experiences with professors and administrators at the community college where this study was conducted. Although professors and administrators are not cultural factors, they emerged as factors that aid the African American males in this study’s persistence efforts. For example, TW#10 identifies Professors and Administrators who have been helpful to him in his persistence efforts

TW#10 here... I have to say.... Professor Stolfus...she’s been helpful....ah.... Victor Ramous.... He’s been helpful.... Professor Neff He’s been helpful.....um.... there’s a lot of other Professor’s.....you’ve been helpful.....and..... ah.....

GB#13 describes personal interactions with Professors that have been helpful to him.

GB#13 Dr. J. about that.....and she expressed some of her own experiences and that....learning to say no...I was talking to someone....it was a professor here.....or something... Yes! It was a Professor.... World Mythology I’m taking.... and I can’t think of his name....and that’s sad because I really enjoy his class.....we were talking....and I was talking about him [JB]...and I was like man!..... If I were.... you know..... had been where I am at that age..... I probably would be doing what you’re doing right now...at this time.... but I had to live through a lot of things to get to this point...you know....it was much faster back then.... I was like talking about him [JB]....and he’s like... I wonder where he got that from... [laughter]...

TD#11 identifies Professors who he likes and the classes he enjoys.

TD#11: I mean like.... The teachers are like..... I haven't had a jerk professor yet... I haven't had one yet....Professor Youngblood.... I love her class....St. Pierre, I have her.....I love her class...Shoemaker, I loved his class.....my co-worker is his neighbor.... So he told me about him..... and other people told me.... you need to take him.... You need to take him...So I took him..... Every time I took a Psychology class in high school and stuff.....the best Professors are Psychology and Sociology their good..... um....hummm....yep.... him and Professor Forsyth..... I ran into him at Sky Zone.... I had him about 2 years ago.....and I was like hey you remember me.....and he was yeah, I remember you..... he didn't remember my name, but he remembered my face... he come in with his little Hawaiian stuff on.... And...masks... that's what I like about XXXX.....it's not tense.....it's not tense...

Harris & Woods' (2016) work on African American male persistence at the community college confirms the importance of faculty as internal validating agents who provide a sense of belonging to students. Harris & Wood (2016) posits that African American males thrive in an academic and campus environment where faculty validate, and provide a sense of belonging. Wood & Turner (2010) describe the importance of "personal attention from faculty, a friendly demeanor, checking in on student progress, and listening to student concerns as aids in persistence" (p. 143-145). Mason (2017), reports that faculty outreach and connections to the African American community are key agents in African American male persistence. Bush & Bush (2010) also confirm the importance of student-to-faculty interaction as key to African American male persistence. Brooms & Davis (2017) posit that increased faculty engagement in the classroom, and faculty serving as mentor's aid African American male persistence. Since the study participants identified positive faculty interactions as key in their persistence efforts, and the research validates the participants assertions about the importance of faculty in their persistence efforts, it seems clear that an emphasis on faculty welcomeness and engagement with students inside and outside of the classroom are important factors to African American male persistence

(Brooms & Davis, 2017; Bush & Bush, 2010; Bush, Bush & Wilcoxson, 2009; Harris & Wood, 2016; Mason, 2017).

Continuing with the first research question, the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence, seventy percent of participants reported self-motivation/self-determination as key in their persistence efforts. Self-determination is a common social work term that describes a client's right to make their own choices and decisions (NASW, Code of Ethics, 2018). Self-motivation is described as the determination by oneself to do what needs to be done (Dictionary.com, "Self-Motivation," 2018). The participants in this study describe self-determination/self-motivation as doing what needs to be done for persistence. The subtheme of Self-Determination/Self-Motivation is considered a personality trait, however participants described this trait as important in persistence, therefore self-determination/self-motivation is included in this discussion.

An example of self-determination/self-motivation can be seen in WT#5 who describes self-determination/self-motivation as taking the initiative and asking for help completing a college application [first college application to Community College of Philadelphia]. WT#5 also describes how he struggled in a different major, which prompted him to take the initiative and ask for help from an academic advisor to switch his major:

WT#5.....And there was another gentleman from another house, who was actually helping people do applications for college. So here it's like word of mouth, I heard what he said, and I said "yo," can you help me do an application too?.....

....so I did that, we went through the process, um... I ended up getting into Community College of Philadelphia. So that was my first opportunity to actually change my life.....

..so the bottom line is that is how I ended up getting into um., Social Work. I said, instead of me messing this up, I talked to um... I had another lady in Harrisburg that I was going to see. And um... I asked her... if it would be ok,

if I changed it...because this is what I really wanted to do.... And that this is the direction where, the direction that I should be going in...

Self-determination/self-motivation is also described as desire for something more or something better by participants. For example, JI#4 describes a desire for a positive life:

....and like just for me... I wanna... I wanna do something positive with my life.... to do something positive...just seeing it being done...knowing it can be done.... If I put my mind to it... um...

WT#5 continues his discussion of self-determination to include a description of desire for the life change that college enrollment offered:

WT#5... So that was my first opportunity to actually change my life. I had a desire.... It took that desire. Right. That first desire was to make a change and do something different. So that's where I started my footwork...I wanted to go to school and I wanted to change my life, and I wanted to do right....

Ryan & Deci's (2000) self-determination theory explains the nature of motivation, and how intrinsic motivation (expressed as self-motivation/self-determination) aids social development and wellbeing. Ryan and Deci (2000) go on to discuss that when a person does not have intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation can be cultivated, and internalized through facilitating competence in a supportive environment. A study by Vallerand & Bissonnette (1992) illustrates how autonomous extrinsic motivation was associated with lower college dropout. Margolis & McCabe (2006) identify the correlation between self-efficacy and self-determination. Margolis & McCabe (2006) also describe that students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with tasks that are difficult, and as a result they become intrinsically motivated.

Palmer (2012) completed an exploratory study utilizing the self-determination theory to develop and facilitate internalization of external goals for success (persistence is

marker of success). Palmer's (2012) study is significant because it details how "diversity officers and other professionals at the community college can facilitate students' internalization of external goals, thereby motivating Black males toward enhanced personal development, and ultimately, greater levels of success" (p.14). Palmer's (2012) study is also significant because it describes how Black males were more likely than other males at the community college to have a personal goal of becoming community leaders. Palmer (2012) goes on to discuss the importance of community colleges serving as training grounds for African American males to realize their leadership goals. Community colleges can cultivate leadership in African American males through providing opportunities to help others, encouraging participation in campus leadership opportunities and extending invitations to serve on campus committees (Palmer, 2012). Palmer's (2012) study also describes how community colleges can develop partnerships with local urban school districts to train black males enrolled at the community college to serve as mentors for young Black males enrolled in primary and secondary schools.

Since self-determination/self-motivation is clearly identified as factors in African American male persistence, it would make sense to leverage self-determination/self-motivation in African American males at this community college to strengthen self-efficacy, and develop community leadership, which hold implications for persistence. (Bush, Bush & Wilcoxson, 2009; Bush & Bush, 2012; Cuyjet, 2006; Palmer, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992).

In continuing the discussion of the first research question, the micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence, sixty percent of participants described being motivated to succeed for others, motivated to succeed for

external rewards, and the importance of support to aid persistence. Although the above identified motivations for persistence are not externally driven as factors for study participants, the participants appeared to be internally motivated to persist for the achievement of external indicators/rewards or motivations. Further, motivation is not an element of culture per se, nor is motivation a micro, mezzo or macro environment variable, these constructs were found to be significant to the research participants persistence efforts, therefore these “external motivators” are included in this discussion. For example EV#1, JI #4, and GB#13 describe internal motivation for external rewards or motivations:

EV#1 chronicles external motivation to be remembered as “more than just a high school graduate,” Additional external motivation for EV#1 is a “better lifestyle.”

JJ# 4 is externally motivated to be a role model, he describes “.....I am the only person [laugh]...in my family to ever....not only graduate high school....but go to [laugh] college.....and that’s another motivation...it’s like....I want to be able to show my younger sister....like its possible.....like....you can do this.....um.... “yeah, and for my nieces....and you know....my step daughter.... And stuff.... You know....that this is the way to go....find something you like, or something your good at...and make a career out of it.”

GB#13 is also externally motivated to demonstrate persistence so his son JB#12 will follow in his footsteps of persistence.

Tinto (1975) identifies external motivators such as family as detrimental to a student’s persistence, and that family as an external motivator should be cut off. However, Tierney (1999) argues to cut off external motivators, especially family is equivalent to “cultural suicide.” Meanwhile, Harris and Woods (2013, 2016), outline background factors including family that impact African American male persistence. However Harris & Wood does not provide specifics about how to engage and link “external motivators” like family to African American male persistence efforts. In addition, although the extant literature is replete with discussion about the importance of family, and/or other supports in African

American male persistence, the existing literature does not discuss how African American males utilize, external motivation to persist (Brooks, 2015; Brooks & Allen, 2016; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Dennis et.al, 2005;Guiffrida, 2003; Jensen, 2011; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Kuh & Love, 2000; Mason, 2017; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Nora, 2001; Oyserman, et.al.,1995; Phinney, 2006; Simmons, 2013; Tierney, 1999; Young et.al., 2011; Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005) and Tierney, (1999) describe “cultural wealth” as the need for schools to connect to communities including family. In addition, the existing literature does not provide studies on external motivation and external rewards specifically as related to African American male persistence (Bush et.al., 2009; Tierney, 1999). Therefore, this lack of scholarship on external motivation and African American male persistence warrants future research.

An additional point that was striking about external motivation as a factor in these research participants persistence found that international students were externally motivated to persist for different reasons than participants who are U.S. citizens. EC#8 and RC#6 are green card holders motivated to persist in order to remain in the United States for a better life for his children, and “to get a job to have a better life” respectively. The existing literature chronicles the education and migration experience of black immigrants however, this literature does not explore the role of external motivators (including green card status) that aid in the persistence of international students of African descent (Ogbu, 1990, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Waters, 1996).

The last subtheme that addresses the first research question of cultural factors that lead to African American male persistence is “Supports.” Supports are described as

“external factors,” in the research participant’s micro and mezzo environment that provide some type of assistance. Two participants JI#4 and WT#5 report being involved in a 12-step fellowship that provides support:

JI#4 I’m also in recovery, so attending 12 step meetings.... and making sure that my spiritual, emotional, physical needs are met and maintained. Um... it’s ah..., it can hard to juggle all those roles, and find an appropriate balance... ummm... Sometimes it make be like eh... [Laughter] is it, this better be worth it!!!

WT#5: they welcome you with open arms... they welcome you right where you at...
And that’s what God do... I’ll meet you right where you at...
There’s a man, and somebody shared with me... this guy who go down the same street... and fall in the same whole, keep doing the same thing... the guy in the whole... says somebody came along, and jumped down in the whole with him... and he said, why would you come in the whole, where I am with all this pain, and he said because I been here before, and I can show you how to get out..

Two participants, TW#10 and WT#5, identify pastors at their church as a source of support in their persistence efforts.

TW#10: Uh..... [Silence] let me see.... Well my Pastor’s been helpful spiritually.... He’s been helpful spiritually...

WT# 5: Well, I hadn’t been at school for 20 years, so over 20 years. So for me this was like starting new, like a babe. So I went to him humbly and I asked him, and I shared with my Pastor, ‘cause he had went through college...

The existing literature discusses the role of family, faculty, and peers as support in African American male persistence (Brooks & Allen, 2016; Harris & Wood, 2016; Strayhorn, 2008; Tierney, 1999; Yosso, 2005). However, the extant literature does not discuss the role or 12-step programs or pastors as factors in African American male persistence. Since 12 step programs and pastors emerged as agents in African American male persistence in this study, it makes sense to

explore how these agents could fit into the African American male persistence puzzle. Perhaps additional research which includes a pilot study/program that engages 12 step program, and pastors as a part of support in African American male persistence could be utilized to determine the effectiveness of this type of support.

The second research question, what micro, mezzo, and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence, found character traits, as well as micro and mezzo environment factors that impact persistence. First, one hundred percent of participants identified self-isolation, lack of motivation, lack of focus, self-doubt, self-blame as internal barriers that negatively impact persistence. These subthemes are identified as individual character traits and not micro, mezzo or macro factors that negatively impact persistence. However, since these subthemes emerged one hundred percent as individual traits that negatively impact persistence, these subthemes warrant further discussion. The fact that one hundred percent of participants identified internal barriers to persistence was alarming. Also noteworthy that while seventy percent of participants in the first research question identified self-motivation as a key in persistence efforts, conversely one hundred percent of participants identify in question two that lack of motivation negatively impacts their persistence efforts. The incongruence of self-motivation as an aid of persistence, while lack of motivation negatively impacts persistence efforts is a conundrum. When self-motivation is juxtaposed with lack of motivation, one has to consider what might be occurring to create this phenomena? The existing literature does not offer any solid answers, therefore this lack of motivation and other internal factors that negatively impact African American male persistence warrants

additional research.

In continuing the discussion of lack of motivation as a factor that negatively impacts persistence, participants reported that their lack of motivation is for different reasons. For example, one participant describes not being motivated at certain intervals because of being tired from working and going school, while another participant lost motivation at certain intervals because he reported too much involvement in student organization that left him feeling burned out. TD#11, JB # 12 and GB #13 further explain lack of motivation as follows:

TD#11 describes not being motivated to continue his education at certain intervals in his college career. TD#11 I had already..... tried to enroll....but I didn't have the motivation..... I was like I am already doing ok..... Why do I need a degree...I felt like I was doing o.k..... even though I really wasn'tBut at that time that was my mindset...

GB#13: I hadn't thought about college in the back of my mind.....you know..... but I thought it was way out of my reach.....

JB#12: Ah.....He kinda tells me all the time.....ah.....that the decisions that I make.....I tend to go out more than not do the work..... I believe that stops me from doing that..... I think just myself.....

JB#12: [sitting up and leaning forward] um..... kinda just like gettin' it done.....like most of the time when I'm writing songs down.....I have like a lotta songs that I wrote down....and a lot of songs that I wrote down.....and I never finished them..... so like ever song that you hear that....there just like cut off right in the middle..... I need more done..... I normally like to go to a studio.....'cause I feel like I can get it done more.....more efficient.....I feel like I be more focused.....'cause I sit at home and there's so many other things to do.....[laugh].....sometimes I can sit down and I just focus on the music.....for a little bit.....and then there's other times when I don't do that.....I want to wait when I can go in a studio to have that type of time....to go to just straight on music..... and that's kinda how I feel about here as well.....when.....for my school work..... I don't tend to like to do my school work at home.....as often..... I feel like if I come here.....it's like I devote..... It's like I am focused..... But sometimes friends get in the way.....sometimes.....my dad tells me all the time.....you gotta tell 'em to move off.....it's more like..... I come here.....mostly everyday.....well..... everyday.....uh.....there

is only one day I actually missed.....it's really just when I go home.....and when I want to study and stuff..... I don't really like to find that time.....um.....I just feel tired from work..... and I just want to leave it alone.....um.....probably shouldn't be doing that but.....that's what..... I tend to do mostly.....and then you know..... I come here..... and I like to sit down at the computer.....and once I'm at the computer.....I get focused on the work and I get it done.....

GB#13: so that was my biggest road block.....allowing outside responsibilities and trying to be of service to too many people.....

Tinto (1975) eludes to internal barriers including lack of motivation as individual attributes or inputs that ultimately lead to drop out. Spady (1970) describes intellectual development and grade performance as internal barriers that lead to drop out. Harris & Wood's (2015) suggest that internal barriers are intrapersonal traits. However, Harris & Wood (2015) also suggest that internal barriers or intrapersonal traits could be exacerbated by the environment. For example, if African American males do not have a sense of belonging or feel unwelcome on campus, and/or have limited interaction with faculty could appear as lack of motivation, and impact persistence. While Harper (2012), and Brooms and Davis (2017) suggest that the deficient view of African American males could be stereotyped as lack of motivation or laziness. While researchers and participants identify lack of motivation differently, and while lack of motivation is juxtaposed with self-motivation, it is not clear how specifically this character trait effects persistence of African American males at this community college (Harper, 2012; Harris & Wood, 2015; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975).

Continuing with the second research question, what micro, mezzo, and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence, sixty percent of participants reported early childhood experiences, and family as factors that negatively impact their

persistence efforts. Negative factors such as childhood experiences including poverty that affect educational experience and family relationships were clear in participant responses. Several participants reported growing up in what they defined as conditions of poverty, where they attended poor public schools, and were raised by single mothers in many instances. EJ#9 reports experience of poverty growing up in a northwestern state:

EJ#9: Well the biggest thing has always been money..... money was always being hard growing up..... ummm... yeah..... so like we lived in like the inner city [quote unquote] um.....but the inner city is still kinda..... vast.... It's not like Philly's inner city....like where everything is like..... where not metropolitan level.....but like...um.....we were in the city.... But where still kinda out there....like I grew up.....going from like apartment -to- apartment..... but the only thing that stayed constant was like my grandmother's trailer....where my family lives there.... So... it's like.... yeah..... and like..... 'cause I live in like a trailer park.....so it's like a ton of people that are all..... seem to be like... in the same kind of situation.... But we were like....um.....it's very weird..... because we weren't like super low.... But we weren't like...high.... Where I lived.... We were like..... like....everyday is still kinda a struggle....like...kinda thing.... oh yeah.... that's all you need.... You can go to the bath room.....um..... and I could always shower..... it might cold.... But I can always shower.....

An additional negative factor that negatively impacted the participant's persistence effort includes mother and father dynamics. Participants indicated strained or nonexistent relationships with their fathers as having far reaching implications, including a negative impact on persistence. Research participants suggest that their father's presence in their lives early on could have taught them how to best navigate their social and academic environments. For example, EV#1 reports he has no relationship with dad and describes his "father situation":

EV#1: its like a strange father situation, where this man was on drugs, alcoholism, abusive, and I couldn't really be around him, I missed him, but at the same time I didn't want to be around someone like that, it's not that I want to point the finger, but it just... you can't expect a child to achieve being around

something like that... Woe... so I feel like my dad was being secretive about it

[K: ok. and so... do you feel that that hindered or effected your efforts at HACC? or...]

EV#1: It does in a way, it's like.... I look at my sister, she's was like the same age as me, she went to college, she did well in her first year, but then she repeated the same mistakes her mom did... and got pregnant, and then life changed, and its going on 12 years, and she still has not come through with a degree

LE#7 outlines “resentments” he holds against his dad and how this resentment impacted his current behavior.

LE#7: Yeah..... Yeah.... But I remember... I resented my dad.... ‘cause I saw what he was doing... when I was...before now... ‘cause I appreciate everything he does for me now.... Because I’ve messed up so badly..... [laugh] just going out..... being insecure with things....you know..... just drink... you crash your car.... Get angry... hydroplane.... ‘cause your driving to fast... Yeah, yeah...um.... . I, I was always tryin’ to be like a man.....you know..... but now I feel like a man.... you know... I feel like I can be myself...so when I feel insufficient I get angry... I blame it on my dad.... ‘cause I thought he was like being a weakling... ‘cause he did just... didn’t just like break things off with my mom immediately you know.....

The research participants experience with poverty, and being raised by single moms with absentee dads seems to fit the “Culture of Poverty” stereotype whereby children raised in poverty are raised by a single parent, and poverty becomes an outcome of lifestyle (Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965). Harris & Wood (2015) suggests that poverty is a preexisting condition or input that does ultimately affect persistence experience. However, Harris & Wood (2015) do not agree that poverty becomes a lifestyle that prevents enrollment at the community college, and ultimate persistence. Green (2006) describes the deficit model and how this view is detrimental to African American student’s persistence efforts at the community college. Harper (2012) provides an anti-deficit model which suggests that African American males are not monolithic, but dynamic and resilient, and

therefore should not be stereotyped or assumed as, poor and or raised by single mothers. The existing literature is replete with data about parental support in college enrollment and persistence. However the literature does not examine the role of lack of early father/son relationship on African American male persistence at the community college (Culp, Schadle, Robinson, Culp, 2000; Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005; Downer & Mendez, 2005; Dubowitz, Black, Cox, Kerr, Litrownik, Radhakrishna, English, Schneider, 2001; Lopez, 2001; Marshall, English, Stewart, 2001; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Phinney & Hass, 2003). Also a preliminary review of existing literature found the deficit view of African American males, however this deficit view does not consider African American males childhood experiences with poverty and its impact on current persistence (Green, 2006; Harper, 2012; Harris & Wood, 2015; Lewis, 1959; Moynihan, 1965).

The next finding from research question number two about the micro, mezzo, and macro factors that negatively impact African American male persistence found that thirty percent of participants reported negative encounters with a Professor's including prejudice, or bias as having a negative impact on their persistence. RC#6 chronicles his struggle with a specific professor and what he describes as biased treatment. In addition, he submits that some professors as not committed to student's education.

RC#6: Yeah... that's um... well... I realize that the Professor's here are like.... I would say their not taking their jobs very seriously... I am a bit disappointed... to a certain extent to be honest... like... I think going to a college, everybody should be treated fairly... and like... your grade is your grade.... Or whatever...like... because I've started from ESL....until now... it's not the same... like... [Silence]... Professors that I'm having now...it's like... if they like you, they like you... if they don't like you your grade is not going to be so good..... they are like checking your paper... and I was like a little shaken up about that.... No.... No.... No... Communication... I am a little disappointed about communication..... ok.. so... for example... most of my classes are with Professor -----...like last

semester and the semester before... like... I would get here... in class... no email, nothing... cause that's the first thing I check... and note that class is cancelled... and I'm like I'm paying for these classes. Like I'm paying more for these classes than anyone else.... So like... where is your part... I'm doing my part....showing up for class....ummmm... There's only one Professor that I can name like... I know he's doing his job.....and its Professor Shoemaker.....If I could give him an award for his class... I would give an award....He's doing his job....communication, everything is on point... it's on point.... Yeah.... And I'm paying to learn... and I am not getting... ok... ok...ok... read alright... its either I'm right or wrong.... It's my purpose in doing... I talk to like some of my classmates...and their like I feel the same way.... I even talk to... I took English 002... well I have a lot of friends...just thinking about... I have a lot of friends, because of us taking English class together.... Were still connected... cause I'm like if this....if I know something I'm gonna share with you... yeah.. Yeah...So I was talking to one of my friends....um... in the Subway Cafeteria... she's like... how comes were not learning anything from these Professor's.... and I'm like saying the same thing to... So it's like... get up come to XXXX for an hour and 15 minutes.... And leave...you try to ask a certain class... it's like keep it simple.... Even when you like raise your hand it's like they ignore....

[K: Do you think it's the Professor... or do you think it's a bias... what do you think it is....?]

RC#6: I think it's both.....I think it's both...

[K: ok...ok... so is it your observation... that you see them treat other people...differently...]

RC#6: umhum.... Unnum.... [no]... I said to one of my buddy in Criminal Justice... yeah... I saw it too... I want you to pass the class... I'm gonna make sure you pass the class....I just saw them last week... that's why I'm saying like..... it's based on..... if I like you or not.....

K: which is that biased.... Wow....

RC#6: Yeah... and that's not fair....you put in all that hard work and it's like their judgment.... I even realize that in my criminal justice group... I do my paper way in advance... I ask my friends...did you do our paper... oh we have a paper due? Today... they rush to computer.... See his grade... and I say... this is not fair....come on..... nope, I'm not getting that... I even went to my advisor and I made a complaint.... But the thing... but the feedback that I got... like the person's the head of Criminal Justice, are like... that don't solve my problem... Everybody should be treated fairly...like... alright... I'm not racist or anything but... like with Whites... and blacks... I should say with American citizens and with blacks... 'cause there was this other guy in my class... and like he dropped the

class... 'Cause I think he felt it... he dropped the class...
[K: So you think he felt the racism... or like the different
treatment...]

RC: unhum... the different treatment... Even with the classmates...
well not with... well with me ignore all that...

Another student, EJ# 9 describes an encounter with a Professor who openly
supported negative political views in favor of the current President Trump.

EJ#9: my experience at XXXX.....oh man.....um..... [silence] I
would say yes.... Only because....like personally....I take my culture
with me like...wherever I go....so... there's like not like a place where
I don't take it with me.... because my culture is like.... literally who I
am....like that's my everything.....so...like..... the way it affects my
experience at XXXX.... I kinda....like... XXXX goes through this
microscope.... Like this tube....that has like a filter of my culture....
And like how it affects me..... so like.... The way that I perceive
someone teaching something will run through like... how I would
normally understand it....like the big thing right now is I have a
teacher who is a Trump supporter....Politically.... I am completely
against that man.....and I am just not with all that.... and it takes a lot
out of me not to say anything..... but just because.... Like... here's the
classroom....like....like.... you just gotta be patient.....you know like
things take time.....so I feel like....you know.... That's something
that's really important to me.... and my culture....and God has a
plan....like....like....like..... there's always a plan.... So I feel
like....as long as I'm patient..... I stay in line... I wait for my
time.....you know.....something goods gonna come out of all this....

The existing literature points out that African American students are more likely to
experience a mezzo environment/campus climate that projects negative, racist and
stereotypical viewpoints of these students (Brooms & Davis, 2017; Braxton, Milem, &
Sullivan, 2000; Harper, 2009; Harper & Wood, 2016; Oyeserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995;
Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). For example, Wei, Ku, and Liao (2011) discuss how African
American males must negotiate their identities at schools by “disconfirming the four d’s:
dangerous, deviant, dumb, and deprived” (p. 1219). In addition, Wei, et.al (2011), describe

how African American males are perceived as a threat in the academic and social spaces on campus. Additionally, while on campus, African American males are more likely to experience unchecked microaggressions. Also, many administrators, faculty, and staff hold deficit perspectives of African American males on college campuses. In addition, Palmer, et.al. (2014) describe how African American men at the community college perceive faculty as “unsupportive and apathetic toward their success” (p. 70). In addition, Brooms and Davis (2017) found that non-African American faculty, staff, and students view African American males as “niggardly,” where blackness is equivalent to being “a criminal, a person of suspect, a thug or a threat” (p. 307-308). Harper and Wood (2016) report that stereotypes of African American males stem from media portrayals and that these stereotypes are in many instances the opposite of African males enrolled in higher education. Expressly, African American males are motivated to succeed in college, and have honorable goals, dreams, and civic desires to create and build a better future for themselves their families, communities, and larger society (Harper & Wood, 2016).

The last finding related to research question number two about factors that negatively impact African American male persistence found the impact of being a “green card” holder on persistence. Twenty percent or two participants in this study self-identified as “green card” holders. A green card refers to an immigration process of becoming a permanent resident. The green card serves as proof that its holder, a lawful permanent resident, has been officially granted immigration benefits, including permission to reside and pursue education (or take employment) in the United States (US Department of State, 2018) RC#6 and EC#8 discuss their experience as “green card” holders. EC#8 does not need to be concerned with implications of being a green card holder because he is married

and has children who are citizens of the United States. However, RC#6 might have need for concern as he will need to complete his degree and find employment in the United States in order to gain full citizenship status. RC#6 is concerned about returning to his home country as he says there is nothing there for him. The knowledge and pressure of having to complete his degree and find employment or else return to his home country leaves him hanging in the proverbial balance, and this knowledge negatively impacts his persistence efforts. Moreover, with the current unwelcoming climate towards immigrants in the United States, the point about “green card holders” is of concern to RC#6, and therefore noteworthy.

RC#6 describes the process of getting to the USA from his home country, and his motivation to remain in America.

RC#6 so the same day... it was accepted...yeah... we prayed... we prayed... and then she called and said RC is accepted... we will be sending the information so he can go to the Embassy to get his Visa too...First... in order to get the VISA... um.... Getting accepted is one thing.... We had to have the money for one semester, one year..... one year.... So when we changed.... It was 24 something.... But when I got here... it wasn't that for one year... I was like.... What... it was less for one semester... it was like...\$3,600 for one semester... yeah...Because in my country...like... education is like a waste... I would say it's like not a big thing... I would say you can get the highest degree, but to get a job is a problem... you have to have like connections.... If you don't have connections, you won't be able to get a job.... So a lot of people they don't really value college... because you can go to college and graduate tomorrow and you won't get a decent job... you have to have... they call it links... like links in a chain... you have to have connections.... Like a lot of big official people they don't even go to college.... yes, it's all about links... links....

With regard to immigration status and the negative impact on persistence, while the existing literature chronicles the education and migration experience of black immigrants,

the scholarly literature does not explore the role of green card status as related to persistence (Ogbu, 1990, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Waters, 1996).

As a conclusion, the findings discussed answered two research questions, first the role of culture in African American male persistence, and what factors negatively impact African American male persistence? Question one found that family, faith and religion, positive school experience with professors, the personality traits of self-determination/self-motivation, external motivations and support positively impact persistence. While the answers to the second research question, found character traits of self-isolation, lack of motivation, lack of focus, self-doubt, self-blame; childhood experience and family, negative experiences with professors and students who are “green card” holders negatively impacted the participants persistence efforts.

Implications for Social Work Education

Based on the findings and discussion in this study, several implications for social work in higher education are submitted. The implications for social work in higher education are rooted in traditional social work, coupled with an African American perspective. Traditional social work in higher education includes evidence based program development and implementation to assist African American males in persistence at the community college where this study was completed. In addition, an African American perspective which considers the values beliefs, practices and experiences of African American males in specific should be integrated in work to aid African American male persistence at this community college.

Since the first research question, what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence found that seventy percent of participants asserted that family is important in ongoing persistence efforts it seems germane to integrate family into African American males persistence efforts at this community college. Kim & Hargrove (2013) emphasize the importance of strong family ties to foster strong ethnic identity which positively aids persistence. Brooks (2015) further validates Kim & Hargrove's assertion by identifying a specific action of adding a family component to African American male's first year experience course as an agent in persistence. In conclusion, since the research supports what seventy percent of participants identify about family as an important cultural factor in persistence, it is vital to identify and implement practices that include African American families in African American male persistence efforts at this community college (Brooks, 2015; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Jensen, 2011).

Since the first research question, what micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence found fifty percent of participants identified faith and religion as an important cultural factor that aids persistence, it is vital to identify and implement initiatives that advocate for faith and religion in programming to support African American male persistence at this community college. Additionally, the scholarly literature supports the participants assertion that faith and religion are important in persistence, which further validates the need incorporate faith and religion in African American males persistence efforts (Brooks & Allen, 2016; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Ojo, 1997; Wood & Hilton, 2012).

Since self-determination/self-motivation were identified by seventy percent of participants in this study to be positive character traits that led to their persistence, it makes

sense to seek ways to leverage self-determination/self-motivation to support other African males in persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Leveraging self-determination/self-motivation could easily be integrated into a peer mentoring group, or other programming for African American males at this community college (Bush, et. al, 2009; Cuyjet, 2006; Dennis et.al. 2005; Simmons, 2013; Strayhorn, 2008). Simons (2013) describes how social connections and relationships on campus can positively impact persistence, and therefore should be incorporated into African American male programming to aid persistence. Meanwhile, Strayhorn (2008) substantiates Simons (2013) position, however warns that the peer mentoring relationships between African American males must be more academically than socially focused to impact persistence.

The second research question asked what micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence, found an alarming one hundred percent of participants who identified internal barriers including self-isolation, lack of motivation, lack of focus, self-doubt and self-blame. This one hundred percent response rate to internal barriers that negatively impact persistence, sounds that alarm for social work advocacy and leadership in higher education to address this disturbing pattern that negatively impacts African American male persistence. Bush et.al, (2009) and Cuyjet, (2006) suggest programming that fosters peer support and peer interaction to reduce internal barriers and strengthen persistence. Yosso's (2005) Community Culture Wealth model encourages colleges to utilize African American male's untapped cultural capital to reduce internal barriers. Yosso's (2005) aspirational, linguistic, navigational, cultural, and social capital seem most appropriate to reduce internal barriers. For example, social capital "is the networks of people and community resources including peer and other social

contacts to provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions (p. 79). Bush et.al. (2009), and Cuyjet (2006) confirms Yosso's assertion about the need for programming to develop social capital as an effective way to reduce internal barriers, and consequently increase persistence efforts. Tierney (1999), takes Yosso's (2005) advance of cultural capital to the next level in that Tierney asserts that it is vital for colleges to integrate African American cultural capital into student programming to reduce factors that negatively impact persistence. Tierney (1999), outlines a three year research study of an existing college preparation program that creates promise for college programming to reduce internal barriers and consequently increase African American male persistence. The initiative utilized cultural values and beliefs as well as certain disciplines to prepare "at-risk" students for college. The program was held in the community in which the students lived. The premise of hosting programming within the community where students live opposes Tinto's (1975, 1993) theory of social integration which suggests disconnecting from culture (including community and family) to effectively integrate into the college environment. Tierney (1999) goes on to concur with Yosso's (2005) cultural capital suggestion that programming aimed at reducing internal barriers to increase African American male persistence should be developed and integrated within the context of the local community. In essence, Tierney (1999), and Yosso's (2005) positions provide an advantageous blueprint to develop and implement programming to aid in the reduction of internal barriers that negatively impact African American male persistence efforts.

Next, since the research findings that bias and racially charged faculty interaction with African American males negatively impact African American male's persistence it makes sense to inform faculty how to work with African American males inside and

outside the classroom. Furthermore, it is important for administration and staff at this community college to gain an understanding and take actions to reduce the negative factors that impact African American male persistence. The existing literature provides comprehensive details of ways that faculty can reduce bias to successfully aid African American male persistence at the community college (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2012; Harper & Wood, 2016; Palmer et. al., 2014; Wood & Harris, 2015). For example, Wood and Harris (2015) provide a guidebook for teaching men of color in the community college. This guidebook provides faculty initiated relationship building strategies, such as “creating an environment that welcome’s engagement, criticize privately and praise publically, increase validation and sense of belonging, and be aware of avoid unintentional micro messaging regarding misconceptions about African American males” (Wood & Harris, 2015, p. 33-38). Palmer et.al, (2015) explicates the importance of community colleges being more proactive in ensuring that African American males encounter faculty who are supportive and student- centered. In addition colleges need to mandate faculty to attend cultural awareness workshops to help them become more informed of how to work with students who differ from them racially, ethnically, and culturally. Furthermore these workshops should take place on a frequent basis and faculty, staff and administrators should be strongly encouraged to attend. Attendance at these workshops by the campus community sends the message that the institution values inclusiveness and wants to promote an environment where all students feel a sense of belonging” (p. 93).

In conclusion, effective social work in higher education to aid African American male persistence at this community college requires micro and mezzo level interventions to cultivate the cultural factors of family, and faith and religion. In addition, social work in

higher education requires the develop and implementation of programming that reduces the micro and mezzo level factors that negatively impact African American male persistence at this community college. Lastly, implications for social work in higher education must be coupled with additional research to effectively advance the identified implications that support African American male persistence at this community college.

Implications for Social Work Research

This study explored the role of culture in African American male persistence at a community college in South Central Pennsylvania. The findings led to the discussion and implications for social work in higher education that will empower more African American males to persist to degree completion at this community college. In addition, the findings in this study led to implications for social work in higher education to address the micro and mezzo factors that negatively impact African American male persistence.

While the literature review in this study addressed a gap in the literature about culture as an agent in African American male persistence at the community college, there are a number of findings that emerged from this study that call for additional research that addresses specific areas of African American male persistence.

The first area of research includes the need for grounded theory research to advance the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), Cultural Integrity (CI), and the Anti-Deficit (AD) models to theories (Harper, 2012; Tierney, 1999; Yosso, 2015). Creswell (2013) describes grounded theory as a way to move beyond description to a “unified theoretical explanation” (p.83). To more fully understand the role of culture in African American male persistence, and to understand the factors that hinder persistence it will be imperative to develop these models as theoretical explanations for persistence. Moreover, the grounded research

approach to create a unified theoretical explanation of CCW, CI and the AD models is necessary for the advancement of the body of knowledge on African American male persistence at the community college.

The next area of research that deserves additional exploration arose out of the findings that the participants in this study reported childhood and early family experiences that negatively impacted the participant's persistence efforts. The scholarly literature discusses African American male persistence and family background as a preexisting experience, and describes the importance of family in African American male persistence. However, the literature does not address the negative impact of childhood experiences and family, as related to current persistence efforts (Brooks, 2015; Brooks, & Allen 2016; Brooms & Davis, 2017; Guiffrida, 2006; Ingram, Williams, Coaxum, 2016; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Mawhinney, 2012; Morley, 2003; Ntloedibe, 2006; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995; Palmer, Wood, Dancy, & Strayhorn, 2014; Tierney, 1999; Wei, Ku & Liao, 2011). Therefore, it would be advantageous to further explore childhood and family factors that negatively impact African American male persistence.

Next, the self-determination theory explores the role of internal motivation as an agent of self-determination, however this theory does not explore the role of ethnic groups with regard to self-determination and persistence (Ryan, et.al, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1999). Since the findings of this research study revealed that self-determination is an important factor in persistence, it is crucial to explore the applicability of the self-determination theory to African American males and persistence at the community college.

In a review of the existing literature on faith and religion as related to African American male persistence revealed five articles (Brooks & Allen, 2016; Harris & Wood, 2016; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Ojo, 1997; Wood & Hilton, 2010). Since fifty percent of participants in this study found faith and religion as cultural factors that led to their persistence, it is paramount to advance scholarship to further explore the specific ways that faith and religion lead to African American male persistence.

The final findings in this study that merit additional research, include persistence and international students of African descent, and persistence and African American males who identify as “Mixed- Race/Other.” First, international students of African descent, there were two international students from a Caribbean island, and Central America who participated in this study. These students presented as green card holders whose reasons for persistence are unique in that citizenship in the United States is an ultimate factor in persistence. Moreover, the scholarship available explicates educational and migration experiences of immigrants, but does not explore external motivation to become permanent United States citizens as a factor in persistence. (Ogbu, 1990, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Warikoo & Carter, 2009; Waters, 1996). Therefore, it seems like the next logical step to further explore the role of immigrant status as motivation for persistence at a community college.

With regard to “Mixed Race/Other,” six of the thirteen participants in this study identified as “Mixed Race/Other.” This majority representation of participants in this study left the researcher wondering about this group’s unique persistence experience. In a preliminary search of the extant literature found a surplus of scholarship that included research about the overall experience, identity, as well as the admissions process of those

who identify as “mixed race or other” (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Museus, Sarinana, Yee, & Robinson, 2016; Renn, 2003; Wong & Buckner, 2008). However, there was no specific literature that investigates the distinction of “mixed race/ other,” from African American males, and/or the persistence experience of this group. Therefore, it seems logical to further explore the persistence experience of students who identify as “mixed race/other.”

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths that evolved from this study include a rich qualitative research experience that generated new findings, new implications for future social work education (which includes social work practice and leadership), and research. More specifically, this qualitative research study explicated the richly diverse stories of thirteen very different, yet similar African-American males. This phenomenological study provided a space for participants to openly disclose their strengths and vulnerabilities, while also revealing the mezzo environmental strengths that led to their ongoing persistence. This study provided the opportunity for African American males to reveal factors that negatively impact their persistence efforts. An additional strength of this study are the implications that yielded a full research agenda, and a preliminary framework for social work education (which includes leadership and practice). This framework for future social work education can be found in advocating, designing, and implementing programming that will advance the retention of more African American males at this community college. Another strength that evolved from this study is the applicability of the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), and the Cultural Integrity (CI) models to further the persistence of African American males at a community college. Moreover, CCW and CI are essential models to be developed to address the factors that impact African American male persistence.

Another strength of this study is the discovery of the Self-determination theory and its potential application to African American male persistence at the community college. Additionally, the strength of this study is evident in the researcher's positionality, as an African American woman, who identified with the background, and life experience of several of the participants which affirmed the researcher's positive assumptions about African American males and persistence. More specifically, the researcher believed at the outset of this study that African American males have inherent self-determination/self-motivation, as well as faith and religion that aid their persistence. The findings in this study, as well as limited scholarship about these males affirmed that self-determination/self-motivation and faith/religion as factors that impact persistence. Lastly, the strength of this study was in identifying elements of culture, specifically family, and religion and faith as factors that positively impact the persistence efforts of the African American males in this study.

Some of the strengths found in this study could also be viewed as limitations. First, the applicability of the theoretical frameworks including Social Identity theory (SIT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) were not evident in the findings of this study. In the preliminary exploration of culture and African American male persistence at the community college, SIT and CRT seemed like a good theoretical fit. However, during data analysis these two theories did not emerge as applicable to African American male persistence. An additional weakness that was also a strength in this study was the researcher's positionality. Although the researcher made every effort through application of trustworthiness to minimize bias, the researcher's positionality of "closeness" to several of the participants in this study, made bias unavoidable. An additional limitation of this

study is that although two elements of African American culture- family and faith and religion emerged, Africanisms, or traditional African cultural elements were not evident in this study (Holloway, 2005).

Additionally, a limitation in methodology with regard to sample size is noted. The sample size of thirteen participants from one campus of a community college was relatively small, which limited the diversity of the sample. Future research on culture, African American males and persistence would lend itself to a larger sample from multiple campuses for greater applicability to community colleges in general. Lastly, the time constraints prohibited a more extensive grounded theory research of this phenomenon. Future research on African American male persistence at the community college would benefit from grounded theory to develop CCW, CI and AD models for richer analysis and deeper understanding of this research phenomenon.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this study which helped explain the role of culture in African American male persistence, and the factors that negatively impact African American male persistence at a community college in South Central Pennsylvania. The findings in this study provided implications for social work in higher education, and social work research within the academy. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines persistence as “a firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.” Despite difficulty or opposition, the thirteen African American males in this phenomenological study demonstrate obstinate continuance in their course of action as students at this community college. Moreover, each of the thirteen participants personified persistence in their

continuing to move forward utilizing internal and external factors to persist, even in the face of factors that negatively impact their persistence.

Appendix A- Recruitment Flyer



You are invited to participate in an exciting study on persistence, culture and African American college men!

“An Exploration of Culture in African American Male Persistence at a Community College”

- **Purpose of the Study:** To gain an understanding of the role of culture in the persistence of African American males enrolled at a community college
- **Eligibility:** XXXXXAfrican American males, who are enrolled at the [REDACTED] Campus, in at least their **second** semester, **or recent graduate**, and who have earned **at least 12 credits**.
- **Participation:** Completion of a short demographic questionnaire, and a 90 minute, audio-recorded interview. This interview will be conducted at a place on your campus and at a time that is convenient for you between November, 2017 and January 2018.

You will receive a \$10 Subway gift card for your participation!

Karen E. Polite is a doctoral candidate in Social Work Education and Leadership at Millersville University conducting research on African American College men.

Participating in this study is voluntary. All conversations will remain confidential. Your name and other identifying characteristics will not be used in any reports or presentations.

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact me as soon as possible at [REDACTED] or kepolite@millersville.edu or [REDACTED].

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Information: This study has been reviewed and approved by the Millersville University IRB. If there are any questions please contact Dr. René Muñoz, Director Sponsored Projects and Research Administration, Division of Academic Affairs at rene.munoz@millersville.edu or 717-871-4457 | 717-871-4146.

Appendix B- Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Millersville University

Department of Social Work

Doctoral Student Investigator: Karen Polite

Title of Study: **An Exploration of the Role of Culture in African American Male Persistence at the Community College**

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to understand the role of culture in African American male persistence to graduation from the community college. More specifically, this research study seeks to explore the following questions:

1. What micro, mezzo and macro cultural factors lead to African American male persistence?
2. What micro, mezzo and macro factors negatively impact African American male persistence?

Procedures: As a participant in this research study you will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (first semester of attendance, current academic standing, family member(s) relationship), and to participate in a 90 minute, audio-recorded interview. The interview will consist of 1-2-questions and 3-5 follow up questions about your experience with African American culture, and your experience in persistence as an African American male enrolled at a community college. The researcher will take notes during the interview and may ask you to elaborate on different information throughout the interview. The session will end within 90 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts: You will be asked to discuss your experiences as an African American Male enrolled at a community college. You will also be asked about African American culture as related to your persistence at this community college. There is a risk that some of the topics you will be asked to discuss, such as any experiences with exclusionary or offensive behavior, or information about your family relationship (s) that may be upsetting or uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any question(s) that makes you uncomfortable, and you may stop and leave the interview at any time.

Benefits: A benefit of participating in this study is the opportunity to provide valuable information that could improve programming and services for African American male students, in specific. An additional benefit of participating in this interview is the opportunity to discuss your experience with culture and your experience of persistence as an African American male enrolled at a community college.

Compensation: The compensation for your participation is a \$10 Subway gift card.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your comments will be digitally recorded and transcribed, and will be used by the researcher to complete a dissertation. In addition, your comments may be used in scholarly publication about culture, African American males and

persistence at a community college. In addition, your information will be forwarded in a report to the college to develop specific programming for African American males. While your comments may be included in reports or statements produced by the researcher, any identifying information about you will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will be coded (e.g., an assigned number and campus), and other identifying information will not be included in final transcripts or research notes.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Information: This study has been reviewed and approved by the Millersville University IRB. If there are any questions please contact Dr. René Muñoz, Director Sponsored Projects and Research Administration, Division of Academic Affairs at rene.munoz@millersville.edu or 717-871-4457 | 717-871-4146. Researchers Contact Information: kepolite @millersville.edu or 717- 380-2205.

Consent: By signing below, you are indicating that you are 18 years of age or older and that you agree to participate in this research study. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any questions or leave the interview at any time. You will be given one copy of this form, and one copy will be kept as a record by the Institutional Review Board and/or the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

I agree to participate in this research study, and I understand and agree that this interview session will be digitally recorded and transcribed.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C-Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Karen E. Polite, Doctorate in Social Work Student at Millersville University

Research Topic: An Exploration of the Role of Culture in African American

Male Persistence at the Community College

1. How did you come to enroll at [REDACTED]?
2. What micro, mezzo and/or macro cultural factors lead to your persistence to date?
3. What micro, mezzo and macro factors have negatively impacted /or hindered your persistence efforts?
4. Any final thoughts you would like to share? Anything you would like to add from this interview? *Ask about culture if not discussed in questions 1-4.*

Appendix D

Demographic Sheet

Instructions: Please indicate the answer that best describes you

First Name, Initial of Last Name _____

Age _____

How Do You Identify Your Race/Ethnicity?

1. Black
2. African American
3. Other _____

Growing up what was your Family Structure: Single Parent, Two Parents, Other Caregiver _____

What is your Current Family Structure: Same, Single Parent, Two, Parents, Other Caregiver _____

What is Your Current Household Composition?

Person #	Age (estimate ok)	Relationship to You
----------	-------------------	---------------------

1

2

3

4

5

6

Current Relationship Status- Never Married/Single; In a Relationship; Live with my Partner/Significant Other; Married; Married/Separated; Married/Divorced; Widow/Widower (circle)

Number of Children (if none indicate zero) _____

What is your current Social Economic Status: Lower income class, Working class, Middle class, Affluent/ Wealthy class (circle)

Academic Major: _____

Campus Where You Complete Most of Your Courses _____

Current Enrollment Status

Fulltime or Part-time; Graduate, Online (Circle)

Class Level:

- Freshman (12-15 credits)
- Sophomore (16-30 credits)
- Junior (31-45 credits)
- Senior (46-60 + credits)

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